

The
People of the Book

Harris



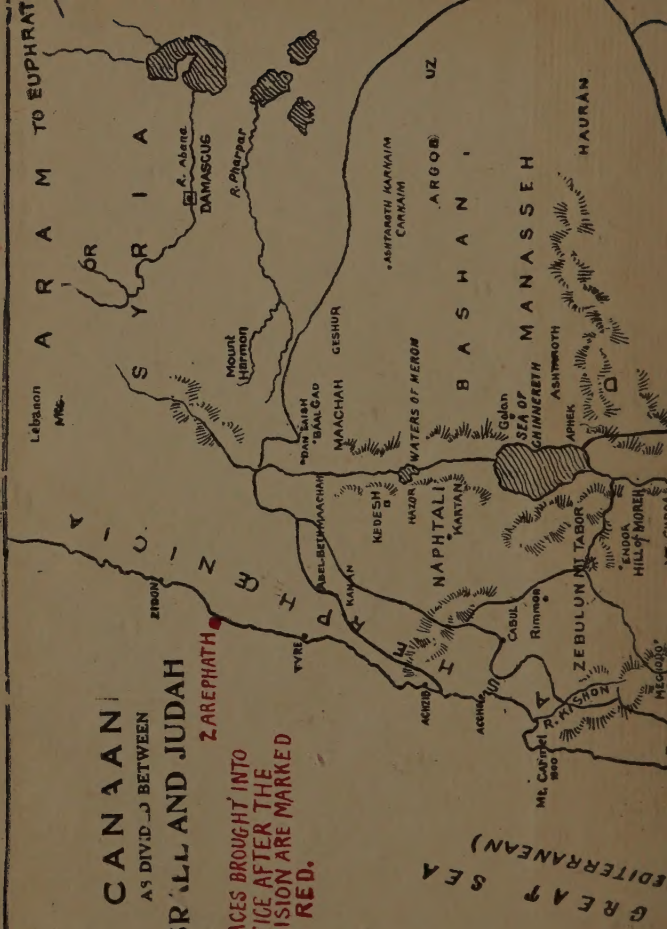
From the Division of the Kingdom
to the Prophet Malachi

Illustrated

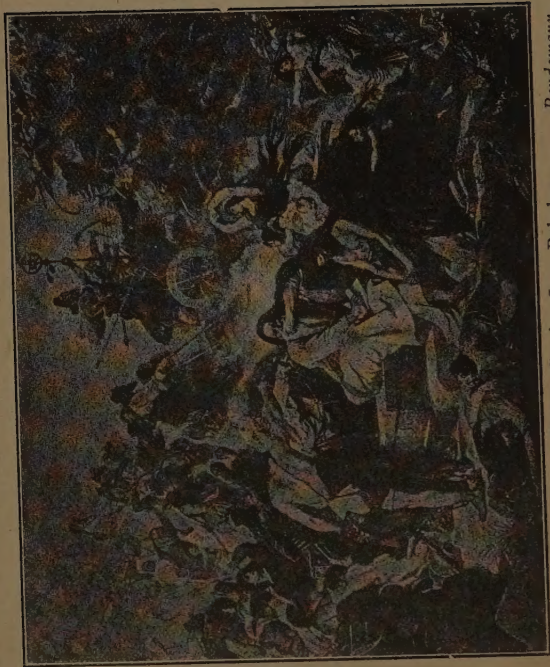
CANAAN
AS DIVIDED BETWEEN
ISRAEL AND JUDAH

ZAREPHATH.

PLACES BROUGHT INTO
NOTICE AFTER THE
DIVISION ARE MARKED
IN RED.







Jews Taken Captive Into Babylon. Bendemann.
See Page 206.

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THE People of the Book

A Bible History for School and Home,

WITH APPENDIX, CONTAINING DESCRIPTION OF THE BIBLE BOOKS,
SCRIPTURAL QUOTATIONS, THE CANON, EXAMINATION
QUESTIONS, AND TWO MAPS.
ALSO, SUMMARY OF FESTIVALS IN HISTORIC CONTINUITY

BY

REV. MAURICE H. HARRIS, A.M., PH.D.
Author of "A Thousand Years of Jewish History," etc.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

**Vol. III.—From the Division of the Kingdom
to the Prophet Malachi.**

SEVENTEENTH EDITION.

ILLUSTRATED.

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PREFACE TO ILLUSTRATED EDITION.

The popularity of the illustrated First and Second volumes of this Bible History has suggested the introduction of pictures in this Third Volume.

To make the complicated period, known as "The Division," somewhat clearer, *Israel* and *Judah* have been treated separately; while at the same time the connection between the two kingdoms has been maintained throughout.

Emphasis has been laid on the service of the prophets, and copious extracts quoted from their writings. For it is their work that gives religious significance to the whole of this period.

The historians differ so widely in the matter of dates of the earlier kings that those here given must be regarded as but rough approximations.

At the end of the book a Resumé of the Holy Days has been introduced, presented in historic continuity. This serves the double purpose of giving a review of the three volumes and a summary of the Festivals of the synagogue.

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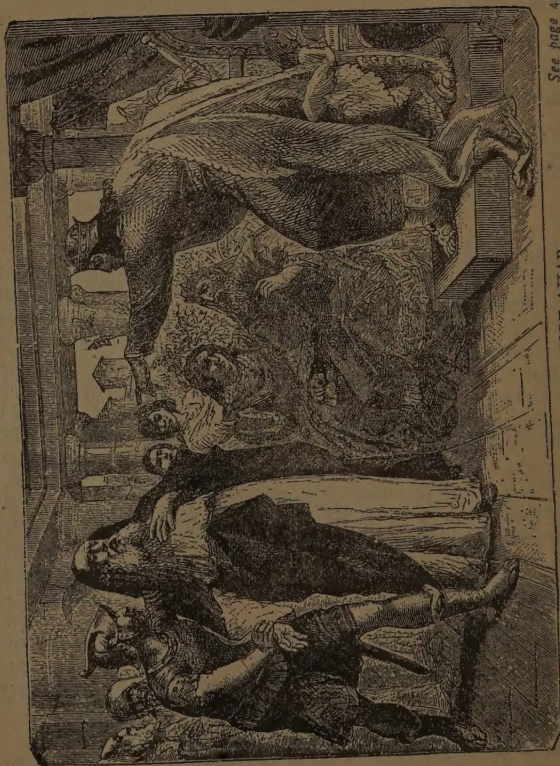
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MICAHIAH BEFORE AHAB.

See page 43.

BOOK I.

THE DIVIDED KINGDOM.

CHAPTER I.

THE REVOLT OF THE NORTH.

BIBLE TEXT: "By pride cometh only contention, but with the well-advised is wisdom." *Proverbs xiii. 10.*

Solomon the Great was dead. The death of its king leads a nation to reflect, and awakens it anew to its duties and its rights. The allegiance of the tribes of Israel to the house of Judah had not been firm, and now, at the opening of a new reign, they once more questioned its advantage. The glamour of Solomon's splendor had silenced rebellion, yet the burden of his taxation had been borne with discontent, especially as his own tribe had been largely exempt. In spite of the external appearance of peace and loyalty, they had bitterly chafed against the forced labors he had imposed. Leading a hardier and less settled life than their southern brethren, they cared less for towns and palaces, for royal splendor and court luxury, and protested against bearing the expense of them.

The prophets, who had always been the defenders of the liberties of the people as against the abuses of the nobility, encouraged simplicity and popular rights. Nor were they satisfied with the religious condition in which Solomon, with his many strange idolatrous wives, had left the nation. It was Ahijah the Shilonite, a prophet, who had inspired Jeroboam to revolt against King Solomon's extravagance. (See vol. ii., chap. liv.) The revolt had come to nothing and Jeroboam had fled to Egypt. He was now sent for again, or perhaps he came of his own accord, to be on hand for a possible emergency. At his suggestion, Rehoboam, the heir to the throne, was asked to come to Shechem to be crowned. Shechem was the ancient capital and second city in the realm, and was within the boundaries of the most powerful tribe of the north — Ephraim. This request alone might have aroused the prince's suspicions, for Jerusalem had been the capital ever since David had conquered it. But it was down south in Judah, and the northern tribes felt more prepared to treat with the king in the midst of their territory. So Rehoboam came to Shechem at their request. Jeroboam was their spokesman, and thus addressed the would-be king:

"Thy father made our yoke heavy; now, therefore, make thou the grievous service put upon us lighter, and we will serve thee."

Rehoboam was dreadfully startled at these words

—he thought he was to be king without an “if”; so hardly knowing what to say, he asked time to consider. He first consulted his father’s old advisers, men of age and experience. Their advice showed prudence and caution:

“If thou wilt be a servant unto the people this day and speak good words to them, then they will be thy servants forever.”

Had he thought fit to take this wise counsel, all might have gone well; but this spirit of submission by no means suited the haughty prince, who saw not the threat underlying the people’s words. He turned to the boon companions of his youth, as shallow and thoughtless as himself, who remembered only the honors of royalty and forgot all about its duties. “How shall you answer them?” said these feather-headed young fellows. Say:

“Whereas my father did lade you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke; my father chastised you with whips, I will chastise you with scorpions.”

This tone better suited the pride of Rehoboam, and he made it his reply. Israel’s endurance had been taxed to the utmost. This insolent message was “the straw that broke the camel’s back.” It was the signal for raising the flag of rebellion.

“What portion have we in David? Neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse” [the tribe of Judah], they cried; “to thy tents, O Israël; now see to thine own house, David.”

Once before that call, "to thy tents, O Israel," had been heard. There was no mistaking its meaning; it was a declaration of war.

Rehoboam rushed to his chariot and fled with his followers to Jerusalem. As a last test of his power in the north, he sent Adoram (Adoniram) to collect the royal taxes and perhaps to propose some reforms. The tax gatherer was stoned to death. Israel had renounced Rehoboam and the whole tribe of Judah. They would choose a king of their own, and organize a separate kingdom where their rights would be better considered. This they did. Naturally the people of Shechem rallied around Jeroboam, the man of the hour. Rehoboam saw that the odds were against him, and although he marshalled his forces in battle, he was dissuaded by "a man of God"—a prophet—from an engagement that would mean certain defeat. Taught by experience, this time he took the good advice. Nor could he do otherwise. There was no brave Joab at his side to quell the revolt, as in the days of David, nor could there have been much of a standing army.

Thus the prosperous empire was split into two kingdoms. The people of Judah remained faithful, of course, to the house of David; so did the southern half of Benjamin, because the Temple was in its territory, while the unimportant tribe of Simeon had become amalgamated with Judah some time before. This fragment of a kingdom was all that was

left to Rehoboam. It was a sorry change from Solomon's extended empire, to be reduced to a kingdom of from fifteen to twenty miles around Jerusalem. It was hardly as large as the kingdom of Holland to-day. Its history from now on and for some time to come will be that of a dynasty and a city rather than that of a nation. Among the foreign conquests each new kingdom retained that which was geographically nearest to it. So north, as far as Syria, and east as far as Moab, fell to the Northern Kingdom, while the Kenites and the Edomites remained tributary to Judah. The new kingdom of the North now held the balance of power, and the center of gravity was shifted to its borders. It was called the "Kingdom of Israel," for it represented nearly all Israel—that is, ten tribes out of twelve, for which reason it was sometimes called the "Ten Tribes." Levi was no tribe with a territory of its own, but simply a community of priests scattered through both kingdoms. Joseph was two tribes—Ephraim and Manasseh. The extent of the Northern Kingdom was from the Mediterranean Sea to the Syrian desert. All the great trade routes were in its boundaries. It bordered on that important center of commerce—Phœnicia.

We cannot witness without regret the nation of our ancestors thus snapped asunder. We have followed in the pages of the two preceding volumes its gradual growth from the days of Moses. While

united in one nationality, it developed into a great empire. Now, divided, we shall often see it become the sport of the empires around it, wasting its best strength in civil wars. Its material progress has received a considerable check. Still, with the rise of the prophets, even this Division will offer certain religious opportunities; for it was divinely destined that the Hebrew people should be something other than a nation renowned for vastness, power or conquest. And with the decline of its material greatness, its spiritual greatness begins.

In the following pages, then, we shall have to follow the destinies of two nations, and since their interests from time to time are interwoven, the record will seem here and there a little involved.

Should Israel have submitted to the rightful heir to the throne, without question?

NOTES FOR TEACHERS AND ADVANCED PUPILS.

It was very unfortunate that Rehoboam should have rejected the counsel of the elders. Youth is impulsive, untried; age brings the wisdom of experience. Most nations chose old men as their advisers, *e. g.*, the *elders* of Israel, the *senators* (old men) of Rome, the *aldermen* (elders) of the Anglo-Saxons and of modern times.

Compare Israel's rejection of Rehoboam with England's beheading Charles I. and banishing James II.; also with the revolt of the American colonies against their mother country.

Rehoboam's reply to the Israelites was the immediate occasion of the Division; Solomon's taxation and tribal preference the remote cause. Give other examples. The tax on tea was the occasion of the American Revolution; what was the cause?

ISRAEL.

JEROBOAM I.—937.

NADAB—916.

BAASHA—914.

ELAH—890.

ZIMRI—889.

CHAPTER II.

THE NEW KINGDOM.

BIBLE TEXT: "Now, therefore, be wise, O ye kings, be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling."

Psalm ii 10-11.

JEROBOAM, son of Nebat, was of the tribe of Ephraim. This was so much the most important of the Ten Tribes, that the prophets occasionally speak of Israel as "Ephraim." Prior to this time it had produced no prominent man except Joshua. Jeroboam was chosen king probably because he had shown himself the most powerful man in this leading tribe of the Israelites. He had made a royal alliance while in Egypt, and had lived there up to this time in great splendor.

His first act as king was an attempt to widen the breach between Israel and Judah by building temples at Dan and Bethel, where some kind of sanctuaries had been in existence years before. Here he set up golden bulls to be worshiped, but only as symbols of the God of Israel.

"Behold thy gods, O Israel, who brought thee up out of the land of Egypt."

At these places he appointed his own priests and instituted sacrifices. This was done to prevent the people going down to Jerusalem at the harvest festival and being perhaps won back to their old allegiance. This act may be further explained by the fact that in those days every nation had its separate divinity; the North was a nation by itself now. He might have learnt this bull-worship while staying in Egypt, although there were plenty of examples of this kind of idolatry among the surrounding Canaanites, to the temptation of which Israel had yielded more than once.

The idea of a spiritual God was still so little understood that this act of the king did not shock the mass of the people as much as we would suppose; they thought they could still worship Him under these forms. There was in fact a teraphim already at Dan (see vol. ii., chap. xvii). It may have disturbed the small prophet party who represented the most thoughtful, and who were zealous for purer religion. Certainly a warning voice of one of these was raised at this change, declaring it would bring sorrow to Israel in later days. To create a yet wider difference between the two kingdoms, Jeroboam changed the Feast of Ingathering from the seventh to the eighth month. This may also have been done because the harvest ripened later in the North.

Jeroboam was quite an ingenious architect. Solomon had engaged him to build those fortifications of

Jerusalem on its northern side known as The Millo. He now erected a number of castles for himself. He built up Shechem and made it a royal residence. Then he laid out Penuel across the Jordan, and lived there for a time, where he could better watch Moab and Ammon. Finally he chose Tirzah, north of Shechem, beautified and strengthened it, and it became the capital for the next few reigns. Perhaps this frequent change of residence was due to local revolts in a kingdom too new to give unquestioned allegiance.

The Syrian provinces, taking advantage of the diminished power of Israel, revolted. So there was now nothing left of David's Syrian conquests—Damascus, Zobah, and Hamoth. Indeed, since Damascus had thrown off the yoke in the days of Solomon, it had become a powerful kingdom, and from now on, the Syrians became as persistent and troublesome foes as were the Philistines in the days of David. We shall read of Syrian wars in almost every reign. They are more correctly styled Aramæans (the Hebrew name), and their land is Aram on the map, while their language was always called Aramaic. But, to avoid confusion, we shall only call them Syrians here, the name given in the English translation of the Bible.

But Jeroboam encountered another foe. Shishak of Egypt made a war tour through Syria. First he attacked Rehoboam, who was now left king of Judah,

perhaps at Jeroboam's instigation; for there was constant warfare between the rival kings. The chain of fortresses that Rehoboam had built and garrisoned to protect his dwindled kingdom on south and west from Egyptian invasion, was of as little avail now as his father's friendly treaty with this power. Shishak broke the castles as easily as the treaty. He took all the temple and royal treasures, and also that last remnant of Solomon's splendor—the shields of gold. Later the king substituted for them, shields of brass. But Shishak was not content with humbling *Judah*. He came north and attacked Jeroboam, his own son-in-law, whom he had only befriended for political reasons! "Put not your trust in princes."

A throne obtained by force or revolution is not so secure as one lawfully inherited through the right of succession. Its whole power usually depends on the army. A king set up in a day is likely to be overthrown in a day. The house of *Judah* traced its succession from the great David, so it obtained from its subjects that reverence for an old-established family which is the surest support of thrones. And we shall see later that it was able to continue this same royal line unbroken till the fall of the kingdom—a remarkable circumstance for such remote antiquity,—while *Israel* become the scene of usurpations, regicides and misrule. Few of its kings died natural deaths, many of their graves were violated and their remains dishonored

Jeroboam died in peace, it is true, but his son NADAB was not popular, perhaps because unsuccessful in war. He had not reigned two years when, while besieging the Philistines at Gibbethon, he was killed by BAASHA, a soldier of the tribe of Issachar. In true barbaric style he murdered every surviving member of the house of Jeroboam and left "none that breathed." Such was the condition of civilization, that his having slain King Nadab and his family did not necessarily stamp Baasha as a bad man, although he was severely rebuked by the prophets for this violence. He considered it an act of patriotism to bring Judah into subjection. He did not fight simply on the defensive, but carried the war into the enemy's camp. Evidently Israel had won back some of the land and power it had lost in the days of Jeroboam. How he fared in these wars with Judah we shall tell when we come to the affairs of that kingdom. He was able to hold the throne till his death, having reigned twenty-four years.

But his son ELAH was not so fortunate. He was an idle drunkard and had reigned but two years when he was killed while in a drunken revel by ZIMRI, captain of half his chariots. We have little pity for him. The times needed a strong man. Although Zimri, following the ancient precedent of a usurper, slew every surviving member of the king's house, the troops were not prepared to accept him. So,

seeing his cause hopeless, he set fire to his palace at Tirzah built by Jeroboam, and perished in the flames after a reign of one week.

The confusion was now at its highest. The soldiers, who had been undertaking a campaign against Gibbethon of the Philistines, hastened to Tirzah with their captain, Omri, besieged the palace, and crowned him king. The rest of the people shouted for Tibni. A civil war followed for four years, in which Omri came out victorious. He was the first to found a royal line in the new kingdom.

When does a symbol of God become an idol?

NOTES FOR TEACHERS AND ADVANCED PUPILS.

A historian of a later day who tells these events in the "Book of Kings," regards Jeroboam's action as an awful crime, and so it was from a later standpoint. What may be permitted in one age, the stricter morality and better knowledge of a later age often condemns.

Give the Hebrew date of the Festival of Ingathering.

State the chief incidents that occurred at Bethel and Shechem in the earlier part of the history.



CHARIOTS AND HORSEMEN.

See page 61.

THE HOUSE OF OMRI.—(*Israel.*)

OMRI—889.

AHAB—877.

AHAZIAH—855.

JEHORAM—854.

CHAPTER III.

ALLIANCE WITH TYRE.

BIBLE TEXT: "When thou hast built goodly houses and dwelt therein, and when thy silver and thy gold and all that thou hast is multiplied, beware lest thine heart be lifted up and thou forget the Lord thy God."

Deut. viii. 12-14.

OMRI was now king, for although Tibni was the choice of some, he was soon overthrown. With Omri an era of peace began, and he tried to win for his nation an illustrious name and to revive something of the glory of Solomon. He succeeded in making his kingdom and himself widely known, for in the Assyrian records that have been discovered and deciphered of late years, of which we shall speak more fully, Israel is called "the land of Omri."

He was the first to see the folly and the evil of keeping up a conflict with his own brethren in the South, and to realize that enmity would weaken both. He preferred to direct his arms against Israel's natural foes, the Syrians. But, from what we can gather from a very meagre record, he was not successful, having to cede to Benhadad (a common name for Syrian kings) the cities of Ramoth-Gilead, Tod

and Jair, all across the Jordan in Gad, and also to grant to the Syrians special trade privileges in his own capital. He was more successful against Moab, which he brought under his complete subjection, as in the days of David, and exacted from them a tribute of cattle. We shall learn more of this in another chapter.

But his abilities shone chiefly in peaceful undertakings. He was the first one who may be said to have founded a dynasty in this new kingdom of the North. He decided to build for Israel a capital worthy of its dignity. He purchased a hill in Manasseh from a man named Semer, and built a city on it, which he named SAMARIA, after the original owner. This was the first capital proper of the Northern Kingdom, supplanting altogether the famous Shechem that lay to its south. It played such an important part in Israel's fortunes, that the nation often came to be called by the name of its capital—Samaria. Later still, when its end came, and its inhabitants were exiled, and strange people were transplanted there, they, too, adopting the name of the city, called themselves Samaritans.

Omri made Samaria a strong military post, and something of court luxury followed its completion. Ambitious for his country's growth, he turned toward the neighboring nation, Phœnicia, that had been a friendly power since the days of David, and made an alliance with it for the extension of commerce.

We have spoken in an earlier volume of the maritime enterprise of the Phœnicians. They had explored the Western Seas, going as far as the rivers of Russia, the Gulf of Lyons, and the tin mines of Cornwall. They were the first traders of their time. Weakened by internal wars similar to those in Israel, Tyre encouraged an alliance with Israel, that would give them both strength against Syria. The Phœnicians of Sidon and Tyre spoke a language very similar to the Hebrew of the Bible, and were a branch of the Canaanites. So, united by language and trade, the Israelites began to adopt their customs and to take them as models for their civilization. Tyrian industries were introduced, Tyrian luxuries followed, and the Israelites began imitating their large buildings, their chariots of state and war. Of course, all these city splendors, taking the place of simple agricultural life, brought taxation, too.

But Omri, in his fascination for all that was Phœnician, did not stop at adopting only that which was improving. The Phœnician worship of Baal and Astarte, with its drunken revels and shameful lewdness, had unfortunately great attractions for him also. Of course, it was difficult in those times to have intimate trade relations with other nations without recognizing their gods. Forgetful or ignorant of the religious superiority of his people, Omri built a Baal Temple and appointed a body of priests to attend it. He seemed to be willing that Israel should lose its

individuality in Tyre. Do you understand what that means? To weld yet closer this dangerous alliance, he married his son, Ahab, to Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal, a Sidonian King, unconscious of the disasters he was preparing for his family and his nation.

So the new Israel had not been in existence fifty years before it had introduced the splendors of city life and its consequent burdens, which it had opposed in Judah, and which were the main cause of the separation; while a dangerous interest was revived in the worship of foreign idols. Those patriots who had assisted the revolt to benefit their country felt sad indeed. How differently things turn out from what they are planned.

Was Omri a good patriot?

NOTES FOR TEACHERS AND ADVANCED PUPILS.

Tell the class something about Phœnicia and its Punic Wars, its great men, Hannibal and Hasdrubal.

Omri was not a wicked king; he simply had no conception of Israel's religion and no idea of the great destiny awaiting his people. Even in later days many Israelites will be found anxious to introduce among their people the civilization of an inferior nation and somewhat ashamed of their own ancient rites whose superiority they fail to understand. Read Maccabæan period.



BATTERING RAM

See page 40.

CHAPTER IV

JEZEBEL OF TYRE.

BIBLE TEXT: "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbors' house nor his field." *Deut. v. 21.*

When Ahab succeeded Omri, prospects looked brilliant indeed. He was able to continue the ambitious plans of his father, fostering arts and commerce, laying out gardens, building palaces. One palace at Jezreel and another of ivory of great beauty, are particularly mentioned. The city of Jericho, which had lain in ruins ever since Joshua had overthrown it, was rebuilt in this reign. All this activity showed that the North was beginning to recover from the check put on its progress by division and civil war, and was resuming its prosperity.

But Ahab also, unfortunately, followed his father's policy in encouraging the idolatries of Phœnicia. In this respect he went further than any other previous king of Israel. His wife, Jezebel, exercised great influence over him and assumed religious control of the nation. For her he built a Baal temple, with all its idolatrous emblems, and offered sacrifices there himself. Not that he renounced the God of his fathers; he worshiped the Eternal God and Baal side by side, and saw not the inconsistency. Others,

of course, followed the royal example; what was right for the king was, they supposed, right for them. But the thoughtful few were startled at this condition of affairs, and their religious consciousness was aroused. The temple in Jerusalem of the God of Israel was very much less pretentious than that which Ahab had built to Baal. What would the outcome be? It is true that even Solomon, the very builder of the sanctuary on Mount Zion, had reared temples to the deities of his wives as well; but that was nearly a hundred years ago; the age was riper now and more ready for the truth, though even then some prophets had condemned Solomon.

Meanwhile Jezebel, with her train of idolatrous priests—four hundred for Baal and four hundred and fifty for Astarte—was setting a very mischievous example to the people at large. It is said that she tried to kill all the prophets of God; there is no doubt that she ill-treated some of them. So, with her zeal for Baal and Ahab's indifference and weakness, it began to look as though the religion of Moses had been in vain. But great prophets were at hand to save Israel from themselves.

A certain incident showed the baneful influence of Jezebel, whose name has since become an expression for female cruelty. The vineyard of Naboth adjoined the royal grounds at Jezreel. The king looked enviously on this field, as he wanted to use it for a garden of herbs, and tried to induce Naboth

to part with it, either for another vineyard or for a sum of money. Naboth replied:

"God forbid that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee."

It was considered a shameful thing to sell the family homestead, and men went to great sacrifices rather than give up the inheritance from their ancestors, which they regarded as a sacred pledge.

Naboth's refusal displeased Ahab very much, and quite upset him, as little things do disturb petty natures. Jezebel, seeing him cast down and refusing food, asked the reason. Learning it, this Lady Macbeth answered immediately:

"Art not thou the king of Israel? Arise, eat, and let thine heart be merry. I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite."

This cruel woman had no scruples and no feeling. She wrote letters in Ahab's name, sealed them with the royal seal, and sent them to the city elders, ordering them to bring forth Naboth, and to secure two "sons of Belial" (scoundrels) to swear that he had "cursed God and the king," which was high treason, with death as the penalty. The cowardly nobles obeyed her command to the letter, and so swift was injustice, that soon word was sent her, "Naboth is stoned and dead." She hastened to Ahab and cried:

"Arise and take possession of the vineyard of Naboth, for he is not alive, but dead, and it is confiscated to the king."

Without any qualm of conscience, Ahab, accompanied by his officers, went off to Jezreel in his chariot to take possession of the coveted estate.

But just as he reached the spot his chariot was suddenly stopped by a man whom all knew and feared only too well—it was ELIJAH of Tishbeh, in Gilead—a prophet.

“Hold!” he cried. “Thus saith the Lord, ‘Hast thou killed, and wouldst thou take possession?’”

The king, startled, cried in his anger and shame:

“Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?”

“Yes, I have found thee, because thou hast sold thyself to do that which is evil in the sight of the Lord. Behold, I will bring evil upon thee and will utterly sweep thee away. I will make thy house like the house of Jeroboam and of Baasha.”

Ahab’s crime against Naboth was considered graver than his adoption of Phœnician idolatry. Not only was it a violation of the rights of the people, but the evil example threatened to endanger the moral foundation of Israel. Even had the prophets been willing to forgive the introduction of Baal worship, this outrage against the life and liberties of the individual they denounced with terrible severity, and they treasured it up against Ahab’s house, to be punished at a later day.

How strangely this incident recalls Nathan’s rebuke of David for his sin against Uriah, when, pointing the finger of scorn at him, he cried, “Thou art the man!” How like, too, their sins were—the

king possessing so much, robbing his subject of his one possession, and killing him to get him out of the way! I am glad to add that, like David, Ahab received the rebuke in meekness too. "He rent his clothes and fasted and lay in sackcloth and went softly." His pleasure in the vineyard was gone; there was the making of a better man in Ahab.

Who was this Elijah who could bring a king to shame? We shall learn more about him in the following chapter. He is one of the first of those great Hebrew prophets who play such an important part in this history.

Which is the more dangerous, a weak nature or a sinful nature?

NOTES FOR TEACHERS AND ADVANCED PUPILS.

Jezebel begins one of the first religious persecutions.

Ahab calls Elijah his enemy. Every sinner call his righteous accuser an enemy. Law and justice are enemies of the lawless, but protectors of the good. We can be judged by whom are considered our friends and whom our enemies. What is the meaning of the phrase, "We love him for the enemies he has made?"

It is seldom that we can class men as wholly good or wholly bad. There were many sides to Ahab's character. The great question always is which tendency will prevail in our character, or will they maintain a balance through life? Read "The Conquest of Self," vol. i.

See Leviticus, chap. xxv. 23-28—the individual right of possession.

"Belial": *Bele*—without *yaal*—worth.

Read vol. ii., chap. xlv.. "Thou art the man."

CHAPTER V.

THE HERO OF CARMEL

BIBLE TEXT: "For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the Eternal made the heavens." *Psalm xcvi. 5.*

In our last chapter we saw Elijah appear with startling suddenness at Jezreel, before the conscience-stricken Ahab. This was not the first time Ahab had seen him. There had been a dearth of rain in the land of Israel: famine and drought, that nearly always followed, brought much suffering, especially to the poor; the streams had dried up, the brooks and rivers had become beds of stone, the trees withered and the grass vanished. Even the king felt the privation, and he and his steward Obadiah were hard pressed to find fodder and water for the royal horses, since the wells were empty. Obadiah was a faithful worshiper of God, and had saved a hundred prophets from the wrath of Jezebel and secretly sustained them.

At this critical time a strange man, with long shaggy hair and a rough mantle of sheepskin fastened around his loins by a girdle of hide, had entered the presence of the king. It was the prophet Elijah. Ahab had heard much of this mysterious man, and when he saw him face to face he trembled. "Is it thou, thou troubler of Israel?" he said, trying to assume a bold front. He could not have spoken

more unfortunately, for it offered the opportunity for a severe retort from the stern Elijah:

"I have not troubled Israel, but thou and thy father's house in that ye have forsaken the commands of God, and have followed Baal."

The prophet further declared that the famine, with its suffering, was the punishment of the Lord for the transgressions of the king and his followers. It was not unusual in that simple age to regard every startling change in nature and every misfortune as a visitation of God. So the prophets would always choose some period of national calamity to make their most stirring appeals and to exhort the nation to repentance.

The people were never sure of Elijah's whereabouts. When they thought he was gone forever, he would suddenly appear at the city gate, and in thunderous tones denounce idolatry and sin. Whenever he had a divine message, no threat or difficulty could restrain him from delivering it to the highest or the lowest. When the king, exasperated at his boldness, sought to lay hands on him, he was gone—whither, none knew; to the mountains or the wilderness, gathering wild fruit for his nourishment and drinking from a chance spring.

One day he appeared on the outskirts of a Phœnician town named Zarephath, on the Mediterranean Sea, south of Sidon, during the famine, asking a widow, whom he saw picking up sticks, to give him

a little water and a morsel of bread; that was all his simple needs required. But times were hard then, and the poor creature said:

"As God liveth I have not a cake, nothing but a handful of meal in a barrel and a little oil in the cruse. I am just gathering sticks to cook it for myself and son that we may eat and then—die. And Elijah said unto her, Fear not, the barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail until the day that God sendeth rain upon the earth."

Once, when her child became sick, and his sickness was so sore that there was "no breath left in him," he prayed to God, took the child in his arms, and handed it to the grateful mother, restored.

There are still more marvelous stories told of Elijah. The following is perhaps the most thrilling picture in the Bible:

Elijah went up to Mount Carmel, whose point you see jutting into the Mediterranean, and called all the Israelites around him, and assembled, too, the eight hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and Astarte, for a trial of faith. He was determined to permit this double worship of the Eternal God and the heathen idol no longer; the people must decide now whom they would worship, and what religion they would choose. There were the hundreds of the prophets of idolatry; he stood alone, witness for the living God.

"How long will ye halt between two beliefs? If the Eternal be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him."

First the prophets of Baal made their appeal with wild frenzy, gashing themselves with knives till the blood flowed. Such are some of the savage practices of idolatrous worship. The Baal prophets were not prophets as we would explain the word. Elijah mocked their madness. Scorning such unseemly action, he called the people nearer to him, and repaired the altar of the Lord that had been overthrown. Raising his voice to God, he prayed:

"O Eternal, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known this day that Thou art God in Israel, and that I am Thy servant. Hear me, O Eternal, hear me, that this people may know that Thou, Lord, art God, and that Thou hast turned their heart back again."

The prayer was heard; the sacrifice was accepted. The people fell on their faces and cried:

"The Lord, He is God; the Lord, he is God."

The false prophets were all slain.

Turning toward the sea, a cloud was seen, "no larger than a man's hand." Soon the heavens grew black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. The enraged queen now determined to be revenged on the prophet who had turned the people from her Phœnician idolatry. So Elijah, having saved the nation, must now flee for his life. He hurried to Beer-sheba, in Judah, thus traversing the whole length of the land, and then journeyed through the wilderness of Paran to Sinai, in Mount Horeb, endeared with sacred memories of Moses

and the Decalogue. A feeling of discouragement steals over him. His work seemed of no use. And so he prays:

"I have been very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts, because the children of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain Thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I, only am left, and now they seek my life to take it away. O Lord, let me die, for I am no better than my fathers."

He falls asleep, like Jacob in the desert, and like Jacob, too, a vision comes to him that answers his doubts in a new revelation:

"Behold, the Lord passed by. A great and strong wind broke the mountains in pieces and rent the rocks asunder; but the Lord was not in the storm-wind. After the storm-wind, an earthquake: but the Lord was not in the earthquake; after the earthquake, a blaze of Eastern lightning [lighting up the mountains]; but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire, *a still, small voice.*"

What does this vision mean? After that magnificent appeal at Carmel, it seemed that the whole nation was converted to the truth and gave up idolatry in one great moment. One mighty summons, and they fell on their faces, declaring that the Eternal only is God. Is this the way Divine Truth has been revealed to man, accepted by him all at a bound? No! not immediately; not noisily, not by sensational display, not by harsh measures, nor by terrific persecution, does the revelation of God come to man. *God is not in the fire, nor in the earthquake,*

nor in the storm, but in the still, small voice. Quietly, steadily, gradually, do the great lessons of God's goodness take root in the heart. Step by step the cause of right gains ground ; oh, so slowly the tide of evil recedes, but the good will triumph at last ! Later in this history a king named Jehu will arise, who will suppose that God is in the violence of bloodshed. He will be as far from the truth as the Baal worshipers.

So Elijah must not expect to reform the world in a day. Great causes progress slowly. Like Moses, he was on the point of dashing the Commandments to pieces, because the people could not grasp their spirit at once. On the other hand, things were not so discouraging as Elijah's despair pictured them. Many thousands "had not bent the knee to Baal." Elijah had been more successful than he supposed. He had changed the religious tendency just when it threatened to become hopelessly idolatrous.

We have no written prophecies of Elijah. The writing of prophecies was of a later date. Elijah was a man of action rather than of words, a hero rather than a teacher. We can understand his discouragement, for he was far beyond his time, standing alone in solitary grandeur. He was almost the only man in his day to see that the different forces of nature are not conscious beings to be worshiped, but that there exists over all nature one mighty Being revealed through law and righteousness to

the heart of man. Even some of those who worshiped God worshiped Baal as well. Elijah tried to show that that was as absurd as worshipping truth and falsehood together.

As mysteriously as he lived, so he passed away. He was with his disciple, Elisha, who was to succeed him, when last seen. Here is the story as the Bible tells it:

“And the sons of the prophets came forth to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master from thy head to-day? And he said, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace. And Elijah said unto him, Elisha, tarry here, I pray thee; for the Lord hath sent me to Jericho. And he said, As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they came to Jericho. And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went, and stood to view afar off; and they two stood by Jordan. And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground. And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me. And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing: nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so. And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

“And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof! And he saw him no more; and he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces.

"He took up also the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and went back, and stood by the bank of Jordan: And he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and smote the waters, and said, Where is the Lord God of Elijah? And when he also had smitten the waters, they parted hither and thither; and Elisha went over. And when the sons of the prophets which were to view at Jericho saw him, they said: The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha."

With saddened hearts many of the young prophets went forth to seek the master. They hunted through the valleys and the mountains, but he was never seen again, and so the belief deepened in the hearts of his followers that he had never died.

Do we ever "halt between two opinions" in our worship of God to-day?

NOTES FOR TEACHERS AND ADVANCED PUPILS.

Coming and going so mysteriously, living alone in the wilderness, Elijah became the favorite subject of legend. The people fondly believed that he could do wonders; that all nature was at his command. Delightful stories such as these often cluster around a great name. To this day, in token of the old belief that he never died, a cup of wine is poured for Elijah at every table on Passover, and the door is opened for him to enter. He was supposed, too, to appear to some rabbis of old as the great defender of the Jewish religion; it was also said that he presides at the Rite of Initiation, Circumcision. Lastly, it is said that in the distant future he will come again, heralding the advent of the Messiah, preaching peace and salvation. See Malachi iv., 5, 6.

There is one sense in which the belief that Elijah never died on earth is true—that the influence of a great and good man never quite dies out. Elijah's work outlived him, and in a measure affected permanently the religious destiny of his people. As long

as the stories of his brave doings and his fearless words were told from mouth to mouth and from generation to generation, so long did his example continue to inspire others to say a brave word and do a brave deed for God and Right.

The undying Elijah, who reappeared from time to time in unexpected places, is said to be the origin of the story of the "Wandering Jew."

Read "Elijah in the Legends" in Isaacs' "Stories from the Rabbis"; "Elijah's Interview," Campbell; "Elijah—Reading and Recitations," J. P. S. A.

The cave is still pointed out where Elijah took refuge overnight at Horeb.

Mention other heroes who are said never to have died.

The "barrel and cruse" were the domestic articles in every house.

The widow had so little, and yet she gave part of that little to Elisha. The poor having least are said to be the most charitable. Some think Tishbeh was in Naphtali.

CHAPTER VI.

SYRIAN WARS AGAIN.

BIBLE TEXT: "Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth."

Proverbs xxvii. 1.

Although we have so far seen only Ahab's unfavorable side, it must not be forgotten that he had redeeming qualities. We shall see him brave in war and also generous to a fallen foe. The old enemy of Israel, Syria, was growing dangerously

powerful. No people west of the Euphrates was as strong. David's conquest of Syria over a hundred years before had only been momentary; the Israelitish yoke was soon thrown off in the days of Solomon, and their relative positions had so changed that, in the reign of Omri, Israel had become somewhat of a vassal of Syria. Now, in the reign of Ahab, we are told that Benhadad II. had thirty-four tributary chiefs in his train and was in the zenith of his glory. Taking advantage of the famine referred to in the last chapter, he resolved to complete the overthrow of Samaria. He commenced the siege; and in order to humiliate Ahab to the dust before ruining him, he sent him this message: "Your silver and gold, your wives and children, are all mine." Hoping to be spared by humble submission, Ahab replied: "Yes, they are all yours for the asking." This timid assent made Benhadad still more brutally insolent. "To-morrow, deliver to my servants your family and money; furthermore, they have orders to search your house and the houses of all your nobles, and to seize that which you value most." This was too much. Any man with a spark of spirit would resent such insult and degradation. Ahab summoned his advisers about him, and all agreed to decline to submit to such indignity. This was, perhaps, what Benhadad wished—to goad Ahab to revolt that would mean his certain destruction. "By Heaven," he swore, "I will grind Samaria to dust."

But Ahab, now fully aroused, bravely sent back word to this last message:

"Let him who is girding on his armor not boast as he that taketh it off."

Benhadad was drinking when this message reached him. He at once gave the order to his soldiers: "Set yourselves in array." Immediately they placed the battering rams and began to hurl stones against the city walls. The battering ram was the most formidable weapon of ancient warfare. The people of Samaria trembled. "Do not be afraid," encouragingly whispered some unknown prophet to Ahab. "Let the young men start the campaign under your leadership, and let the rest of the army (some 7,000 men) follow." The word of a prophet was regarded ever as a divine message; so the untried youths went bravely forward, followed by the rest of the army, which was not large, for the attack was so sudden. Word was brought of their approach to the drunken king. "Whether they come for peace or war, seize them alive," he commanded. But that was easier said than done. Every young Israelite brought down his man anticipating the experience of the battle of Bunker Hill). The vaunting Syrians fled before their arrows; the young men pursuing them with great slaughter. Benhadad barely escaped on horseback. All his horses and war chariots were seized. So much for his boasting! But the war was

not yet over, and the prophets advised the king to keep in readiness for another attack.

They were right. The followers of Benhadad advised him to try the chances of war again. "Israel's god is a god of the hills; that is why they were stronger; let us meet them in the plains and we will get the better of them. Only let us muster a great army, not led by the vassal kings, but by your own captains." Such was the idolatrous idea of the limited power of the God of Israel. Still, Syria's defeat in the hills may have a more reasonable explanation. In the hills they could not use their cavalry; as Israel had no cavalry, the Syrians would have an advantage over them in the plain.

Again we hear the encouraging voice of the unknown prophet speaking in the name of God, as the prophets always did:

"Because the Syrians have said the Lord is the God of the hills, but He is not the God of the valleys, therefore will I deliver all this great multitude into thine hand, and ye shall know that I am the Lord."

So, just about a year after his defeat, Benhadad gathered a vast army at Aphek, in the plain of Jezreel. When Ahab's small army came into the field they looked like "two little flocks of goats" beside the countless hosts of the Syrians. It was the largest army seen in that region for some time. Seven days they watched each other, and then the encounter began. So fierce was the onslaught and so valiant

were the Israelites, that in one day many thousand Syrians were slain on the field. The rest took refuge behind the walls of the city; but the walls falling, crushed many more. The frightened king fled and kept in hiding. His friends came to him and said:

"We have heard that the kings of Israel are merciful kings. Let us put sackcloth on our loins and ropes on our heads and go out to the king of Israel. Perhaps he will save your life."

What we like best in this suggestion is the reputation for kindness and mercy that Israel had already earned, even at that far-off time; it meant more than all their victories. Nor had they judged Israel wrongly, for when the servants of the haughty Benhadad came to Ahab in this cringing manner and at his feet begging him to let their master live, the generous Ahab immediately cried: "What! is he still alive? he is my brother." They ran back to their master with the joyful news. Ahab took the crestfallen Benhadad into his chariot. In a burst of gratitude at this deliverance, he promised to restore to Ahab all the cities which his father had taken from Omri, and to assign a certain quarter in Damascus for Israelite traders. The alliance settled, Ahab let him go.

Three years of peace followed. During this time Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, of whom we shall read in the chapters on Judah, came to visit Ahab; for, like Omri, he too advocated peace and good-will

between the two kingdoms that never should have been divided. This royal visit was the opportunity for renewed alliance. Now, while Benhadad may have returned to Ahab some of the cities taken from Israel by his father, he had broken his promise with regard to the important city of Ramoth Gilead. This he still retained. Ahab was not satisfied with this breach of treaty, and, encouraged by his previous successes, he cried: "Ramoth Gilead is ours, and why should we sit still and not try to win it back again?" Turning to Jehoshaphat, he said: "Will you let your army join mine in battle?" Jehoshaphat responded generously: "Consider my horses and my men yours." But, being the more religious of the two, he said: "Let us first consult the prophets of God." They were summoned.

Most of these so-called prophets that gathered around Ahab and Jehoshaphat were commonplace men; there was certainly not one like Elijah among them. Hoping for the best, and wishing to please the kings, who were seated in state at the gate of Samaria, they foretold victory by means of symbols. But the more earnest Jehoshaphat was not satisfied:

"Is there not here besides a prophet of the Lord?" Ahab answered, "There is one man, Micaiah, son of Imlah, but I hate him, for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil." "Do not say so," said Jehoshaphat, and so Micaiah was called.

While hating him for his candor, Ahab at the

same time trusted him for it; he respected him just because he disliked him. He asks:

"Shall we go up to battle or shall we forbear?"

"As the Lord liveth, I will speak the truth," replied Micaiah.

Micaiah honestly believed that the king would be defeated, and was not afraid to say so, in spite of the taunts of the other prophets and the displeasure of the king. For foretelling disaster, he was put in prison and fed on bread and water—prison fare.

Feeling some misgiving in spite of the favorable replies of the majority, Ahab went to battle at Ramoth Gilead, disguised as a common soldier. Now, Benhadad, not so generous as his rival, had given orders to his men to direct their arrows particularly against the person of King Ahab himself. At first, seeing Jehoshaphat in royal robes, it was supposed that he was the king of Israel, and a hot fire of arrows was directed against him, but when he raised his war cry, "For God and Jehoshaphat," they knew they were mistaken, and turned their arms elsewhere. But one of the Syrians drawing his bow at a venture, it entered between the lower armor and the breast-plate of Ahab. But he was much too brave to discourage his warriors by fleeing from the battle-field. He quietly whispered to the driver of his chariot: "Drive me toward the back of the army, for I am sore wounded." With the blood flowing down through his armor, he bravely

stood up, cheering his men, till he fell exhausted in his chariot, and died toward night.

The battle was an undecided one, for at the king's death the people dispersed to their homes. They had left the east of the Jordan more at the mercy of Syria than before. Mournfully they brought Ahab's remains back to Samaria. He had been a valiant king, fostering the arts, developing Samaria, maintaining peace with Judah, and checking the Syrians. Ah! if he had not been so weak as to yield to the wicked Jezebel in the building of heathen temples and in the seizing of the estates of Naboth!

How could Ahab dislike Micaiah while respecting him?

NOTES FOR TEACHERS AND ADVANCED PUPILS.

While Rehoboam lost nearly all his kingdom by not taking the advice of the *elders*, Ahab saved his by letting the brave and eager *youth* lead the army. Age is best for counsel, youth for action.

It was still believed that God revealed the future to the prophets. Indeed, that meaning of 'prophet' has survived to-day. But as time went on the prophets more and more discarded the claim to such powers, and became simply the preachers of righteousness, who could foretell the future only in that they foresaw the disaster that some time or other must always follow evil and the distant good that will be the certain outcome of right living.

Not all praise Ahab's kindness to Benhadad. Some consider it a weakness. Kings are often judged by different standards from those of individuals.

Benhadad's demand for the wives and children of Ahab practically meant the demand for his kingdom.

There is an Aphek east of the Sea of Chinnereth where the second battle with Syria may have taken place.

The Syrians appearing before Ahab with ropes around their necks reminds us of the six men of Calais who brought ropes for their execution to Edward III. of England that he might save their city—fourteenth century.

Notice the usual weapon was the bow.

The arrow entering the crevice of Ahab's armor recalls the arrow of Paris that found its way into the heel of Achilles, his only mortal part, as told in the pages of Greek mythology.

How unexpected are the fortunes of war! Ahab alone was more successful than when he had the army of Judah to help him.

CHAPTER VII.

THE MOABITE STONE.

BIBLE TEXT: "O that my words were now written!
O that they were inscribed in a book! That with
an iron pen and lead they were graven in the rock
forever."
Job xix., 23, 24.

The eldest son of Ahab, AHAZIAH, succeeded his father on the throne. He kept up friendly relations with Jehoshaphat of Judah, and would have undertaken some maritime expeditions with him had the latter consented. After he had reigned two years, he met with an accident, falling from a lattice, from which he never recovered. Wounded and in pain, he sent to ask help of an idol of the Philistines. For this Elijah, who was then still alive, severely rebuked him:

"Is it because there is not a God in Israel that ye come to inquire of Beelzebub, god of Ekron?"

An important vassal of Israel, Mesha, King of Moab, taking advantage of Ahab's repulse and death, threw off the Israelitish yoke. Being an extensive sheep-owner, he had been compelled by Omri to pay an annual tribute to Israel of a hundred thousand lambs and the wool of a hundred thousand rams. This he refused to pay any longer, and boldly asserted his independence. Now, the Bible is not the only record of this event. As late as the year 1868, a valuable relic was discovered that gave fresh evidence of the Bible record. In those days, when printing and newspapers were unheard of and when even writing was rare, if a monarch wished to perpetuate the record of his deeds, he would have an account of them cut in stone on the walls of temples, on the buttresses of bridges, on obelisks or on monumental stones, set up for that express purpose. This Mesha of Moab inscribed his revolt against Israel on a stone that was recently unearthed and that has since been called "the Moabite Stone." It was found near the Dead Sea, in the old territory of Moab. In size it was nearly four feet long and two feet broad, and the inscription was engraved in old Phœnician. The scientific explorer encountered not a little difficulty and not a little danger in obtaining a copy of this precious historic monument from the ignorant and grasping Bedouins. As it was, they destroyed part of it.

However, most of it has been deciphered. This

stone, which was raised in honor of Chemosh, the god of Moab, tells how Omri of Israel had brought Moab under subjection, taking complete possession of the city of Madebah. Mesha then tells us that at the death of Ahab he laid siege to Kirjatheim, took it, and slaughtered all the inhabitants in honor of his God Chemosh. Nebo was also taken, and the inhabitants treated in the same barbarous way. It also tells of the conquest of other places. Madebah, Kirjatheim and Nebo will all be found in Reuben, which adjoins Gad.

But in the meantime JEHORAM had succeeded his elder brother, Ahaziah, in whose reign these conquests were probably made, and who had died childless. As he is sometimes called Joram, we shall use his shorter name to distinguish him from Jehoram of Judah. King Joram did not propose to let Mesha of Moab have it all his own way. Like his father and brother, he also sought the aid of Jehoshaphat of Judah. Jehoshaphat not only consented in the same cordial way in which he replied to Ahab—"Consider my people and horses yours"—but he also induced his vassals, the Edomites, to join in the campaign. This Mehsa must have been a formidable opponent to make it necessary for three armies to unite against him. They took a seven days' journey, approaching Moab from the south, on the Edomite side. Meeting with no water, their courage failed, and Joram began to

fear that Moab would get the better of them all.

Jehoshaphat suggested that they should ask counsel of one of the prophets of God, in accordance with that ancient practice that has already been explained. Who was at hand? Some one answered: "Elisha, son of Shaphat, is here, who poured water upon the hands of Elijah"—*i. e.*, ministered unto him. While not very willing to aid the indifferent Joram, the presence of the God-fearing Jehoshaphat induced Elisha to respond to the call. The prophet first called in a minstrel to inspire him, and then foretold their victory. Their first act was to dig trenches to catch rain-water to supply them and their cattle during the siege. The next day rain fell, filling the trenches. As the morning sun shone on it, it looked red, like blood, and the Moabites actually mistook it for blood. "Come," they said to each other, "let's to the spoil; these three kings have quarreled and fought amongst themselves." This notion put them off their guard.

Alas for the Moabites! they were soon to learn that such was not the case. Before they could recover from their surprise, they were defeated with awful slaughter, and then plunder and desolation followed. Every city but one was overthrown and leveled to the ground. Fields and vineyards were destroyed, wells stopped up, trees cut down; they left a desolate wilderness behind them. How cruel

war is! Mesha gathered seven hundred picked men to try and break through the Edomite ranks where his enemies were weakest, but in vain.

Then in sheer despair he resorted to an awful idolatrous custom of antiquity. He took his eldest son and handed him to his priests to burn him as a sacrifice to his god Chemosh, hoping in his ignorant, savage way that this might win his idol's favor. It certainly frightened the Israelites, who, though horrified at the awful deed, half believed in a superstitious way that it had some power. In their righteous wrath at such an awful act, they left him alone and abandoned the siege. So the battle ended in that undecided way, and Moab was left in possession of his own.

In this campaign Joram showed energy and ambition. We know little more of him. He cultivated the arts and tolerated Baal, much as Ahab had done; But, on the whole, his religious tendency was less idolatrous than that of his father Ahab or his brother Ahaziah. He removed the fetish stone that Ahab had erected in front of the Baal Temple at Samaria. So Elijah's teaching had already left its influence. We shall meet Joram again in another campaign against Syria.

Can you name any stone monument existing that recalls an incident of ancient times?

NOTES FOR TEACHERS AND ADVANCED PUPILS.

Stone seems to have been one of the first materials used by man. The Stone Age, in which all implements were stone, is the earliest period in which we can trace man's presence on earth. So the first monuments were stone, and have left their traces in names of places—Galeed, Ebenezer (see vols. i. and ii.) We find them used for idols, too. The Kaaba stone at Mecca was at first an idol, though later idealized into a symbol. Stone was one of the first substances used for writing—*e. g.*, the Commandment tablets, obelisks, etc. Shakespeare speaks of "sermons in stones"; and when we look at the great rocks built by the elements from grains of sand and reduced to sand again, or see vast boulders on which the glaciers have left their scratches ages ago, we may well feel that we behold the footprints of God.

"Elisha calls a minstrel." On the influence of music—see vol. ii., chap. 8.

A full account of the Moabite stone, with a complete translation, will be found in Geikie's "Hours with the Bible," vol. iv., page 104. The stone is now in the Louvre in Paris.

Jehoshaphat is said to have sung Psalms xxvii. and lviii. to commemorate the great victory.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MANTLE OF ELIJAH.

BIBLE TEXT: "When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness unto me; because I delivered the poor that cried and the fatherless also that had none to help him."

Job xxix., 11, 12.

Elisha, to whom we have already referred, took up the prophetic mission of Elijah. We shall have

to go a little back in the story to tell how Elijah chose him as his pupil, for, like Joshua, he was first the minister or servant of the man whom he later succeeded. Elisha, a well-to-do farmer, was born at Abel-Meholah, near Bethshean, in Issachar, and was the son of the judge of that place. He was one day ploughing his land with twelve yoke of oxen, he being with the twelfth, when Elijah stepped forward and threw his mantle over him. This was immediately understood as a symbol of his call to leave all these possessions and this comfortable life and follow the hardships and dangers that beset the true prophet's career. Elisha must have shown a fitness for this holy work, and may at times have mingled with the prophet companies, for at once he ran toward Elijah and said:

"Let me go and kiss my father and mother good-bye, and then I will follow thee."

So, slaughtering his oxen and breaking his plough, he cooked them both together, as an indication that he thus closed his past life. Part of the oxen was used as a sacrifice, the rest as a feast for his men. The ceremony over, he departed with Elijah and became his attendant. And he followed him, clinging to him as steadfastly as Ruth clung to Naomi.

Yet the characters of the two men were distinctly different. Elijah was a lonely man of the wilder-



ELIJAH PUTTING HIS MANTLE ON ELISHA.

See page 52.



NAAMAN'S WIFE AND THE CAPTIVE MAID. *See page 75*

ness; Elisha was a man of cities, working among the people and wearing their dress. Elisha was not so bitter or relentless as Elijah; he was amiable and gracious. Elijah, by far the greater man, had something of the sternness of Samuel. He had to be stern; the royal house and the court were all given over to Baal. A man less resolute, lacking his iron will, could never have so stirred and changed the hearts of the people. Although Elisha also showed himself severe at times, his nature was on the whole gentle, suggesting a mission of love. On one occasion he burst into tears, because he feared that Hazael, Benhadad's successor, would be cruel to Israel. Many years after the death of Joram, a later king of Israel was about to slay his captive enemies (Syrians) according to the barbarous usage of the age. Elisha gently restrained him, saying:

"Thou shalt not smite them: wouldest thou smite those whom thou hast taken captive with thy sword and with thy bow? Set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink, and go to their master."

Though he made Samaria his home and built a house there, his duties among the people brought him all over the country—north to Carmel and its neighborhood, further down to Gilgal, and occasionally as far south as Edom and Moab. At times he was consulted by kings—by Jehoshaphat of Judah as to making war, by Benhadad of Syria to find out whether he would recover from his sickness, by

Joash of Israel, who came to him, when on his death-bed, to ask whether he would succeed against the Syrians. At times, again, he was sought by the humblest and lowliest to help them in their dire necessities.

Once a poor widow of one of the prophets came crying to him that the creditor had come to take her children for bondsmen in payment of her debts. "What can I do for you?" said Elisha, kindly. "What have you in the house?" "Not anything save a pot of oil." "Go borrow vessels not a few from your neighbors, and pour the oil into them—you will find that it will fill them all. Then sell the oil, pay your debts, and you and your children may live on the rest."

Here is another story: The men of Jericho, in Benjamin, complained to him that while the situation of the city was pleasant, the water was bad, injuring the produce. He asked them to bring him some salt in a new cruse. He poured it in the spring of the water. From that time it lost all its evil qualities.

On his many journeys he often passed through Shunem, not far from Gilboa, where Saul fell. There lived here a woman of some family prominence. Seeing him pass, she asked him, with true Oriental hospitality, to come in and refresh himself with a meal—just as Abraham had invited the strangers. Elisha accepted her kindness; and whenever he

passed that way he would stop there and eat bread. She said to her husband :

"Now I perceive that this is a holy man of God. Let us prepare for him a little chamber and place there a bed, a table, a stool, and a candlestick. And it shall be when he cometh to us he shall turn in thither."

Seeing this kindness shown him, Elisha asked Gehazi, his servant, to call her to him. She came. "Now," said the prophet to her, "you have taken much care of me. What can I do for you? Shall I put in a good word for you to the king or to the captain of the host?" She answered with quiet dignity :

"I dwell among my own people."

One day her child, who was born after the prophet had come to stay there, and whose birth was ascribed to the blessing of his presence, fell sick. He had gone out to the field to his father to join the reapers, and complained of a pain in his head—probably an attack of sunstroke. The child was brought home to his mother, and died at once in her lap. She placed the dead boy on the prophet's bed, keeping back her deep grief and hiding her tears, that none might see. She simply asked that one of the asses be prepared to take her to the prophet. "Why?" said her husband ; "it is neither the new moon nor the Sabbath !" The suffering woman only answered, "Peace !" "Slack not thy riding," she whispered to the servant. In a few hours she reached the man

of God at Mount Carmel. She flung herself at his feet in agony, and Gehazi would have pushed her aside, thinking it disrespectful to his master. But the tender-hearted prophet, seeing her pain, said: "Let her alone, for her soul is vexed within her." Soon he learned the sad news. Without a word he hastened back with her, went into the room where the child lay, and shut the door. Then he pressed the child's cold form to his breast; it lived. The grateful mother fell at his feet and bowed herself to the ground. She said nothing, her heart was too full. She was a woman of few words at any time. When we feel deepest, we can say least.

Does not the desire to help others often give us an unexpected power?

NOTES FOR TEACHERS AND ADVANCED PUPILS.

The ordination by throwing one's mantle over the shoulders of the disciple is followed by other religions—by Mohammedans and Brahmans. In later days the rabbis ordained their pupils by laying their hands upon their heads and uttering a blessing. The Hebrew word of "laying on hands" is *Semicha*; this has come to be the name of the rite.

"What have you?" said Elisha to the widow. "Nothing, save a pot of oil." *Then she had something.* She was not so completely destitute as she at first thought. It was that very pot of oil that the prophet made the means of her support. Our salvation always comes from that which we already possess. We must not meet trouble half way. Notice, too, that the oil was supplied for as many vessels as she had; but when there were no more vessels, there was no more oil. God teaches us to adapt our needs to our resources.

Just as the salt sweetened the water and, as we shall read in the next chapter, made good the herbs, so no soul is so abandoned, so lost to all good, but it may be won back to its old sweetness and purity, if we pour into the heart the elixir of love and sympathy that changes the alloy of evil into the gold of character.

"I dwell among my own people." That reply is worth remembering; it meant so much. She had shown kindness to the prophet, not with the expectation of any reward, but out of simple humanity. She did not desire to "be mentioned to the king or to the captain of the host," nor to any other great person. She wanted no royal favors. She "lived in the midst of her people"—such was her station in life. For that she had ample, and she asked for nothing better than the continued companionship of those among whom she had always lived.

The Shunemite woman wanted nothing of Elisha, helping him out of the pure kindness of her heart; yet he was able to render unto her a great deliverance, and "the bread cast on the water returned after many days."

As to the laws of slavery, see Lev., chap. xxv. 39-44, and vol. i., chap. xxxvi. The Hebrew law was much more humane than the practices recorded in this chapter.

CHAPTER IX

"THE CHARIOTS AND HORSEMEN OF ISRAEL."

BIBLE TEXT: "Behold my servant whom I uphold. I have put my spirit upon him. He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. A bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he shall not quench. He will bring forth justice in truth."

Isaiah xlii. 1-3.

One story is told of Elisha which shows that his kindly help was never withheld, even when sought

by the enemy. Naaman, one of the Syrian generals, was suffering from leprosy, an unfortunate disease very common in the East. During one of the wars with Israel, a little Israelitish maid had been taken captive, and she waited on Naaman's wife. One day she said to her mistress :

"Would that my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria, then he would recover him from his leprosy."

Her words were brought to the general, and he told them to the king. "Go," said his lord, "and I will give you a letter to the king of Israel." So they must have been at peace just then. We cannot say what king it was, Elisha lived through so many reigns. The king was frightened when he received the Syrian letter, thinking it an excuse for a quarrel. "Am I God, to kill or to make alive?" he cried. But nothing frightened Elisha :

"Let him come to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel."

Naaman came with a fine retinue of followers, bearing ten talents of silver, six thousand pieces of gold, and ten changes of raiment, which he intended to offer as a present for his recovery. Elisha simply sent this message through his servant :

"Wash in the Jordan seven times, and then thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean."

Naaman was foolish enough to be angry at the means of cure offered. He thought that Elisha

would just raise his hand, and, presto! he would be cured, or utter a word, like some Egyptian magician. "Bathe in the Jordan, indeed! Are not Abanah and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the rivers of Israel?" So he went off in a rage. Then his servants tried to reason with him:

"Had the prophet bid you do some great thing, you would have done it; how much rather, then, when he saith, Wash and be clean?"

So he obeyed the prophet's advice, after all, and—was healed. With all his company he traveled back to Elisha, and said:

"Now I know there is no God in all the earth but in Israel. I pray thee accept a present from thy servant."

But Elisha replied:

"As the eternal liveth before whom I stand, I will accept nothing."

No urgency could induce Elisha to accept a gift. Naaman went away thoroughly believing in the God of Israel. He even asked Elisha that he might be forgiven whenever he would be compelled to bow to the Syrian idol when with his master, the king. Think of that!

Here are some more stories of the prophet:

Elisha came to Gilgal, near Jericho, and there was dearth in the land. Hard pressed for a meal, the young prophets that were about him gathered some herbs; but some wild gourds that are poisonous were

gathered among them. They cried to Elisha, "Oh, man of God, there is death in the pot!" He poured some meal upon them and they became good.

At Baal-shalisha, in Mount Ephriam, he was given a present, bread of the first fruit—twenty barley loaves and fresh corn. Elisha said to his servant: "Give this food to all the people gathered here." "But I cannot set this small quantity before a hundred." "Do as I bid thee," said he; "they shall eat and they shall leave thereof." And so it was; all had enough, and some was left over.

A company of persons were removing their home to the Jordan, where they thought they would have more room. They asked Elisha to go with them, for they loved to have their guide and teacher always near them. He graciously consented. In cutting down the trees to build their houses, the iron head of one man's axe flew off into the water. "Alas! my master," he cried to Elisha, "it was borrowed." The prophet cut a stick and threw it in the water; the iron floated to the surface, and was saved.

They were hard times, these days of Elisha's ministry, of almost continual war and siege, with their dreadful consequences, famine and suffering. The consoling and inspiring words of the prophet were very precious to the downcast people. His constant assurance of God's protection and the unfailing promise of His assistance often saved their hearts from breaking. He was not only their religious

teacher and their comforter, but fired the spirit of patriotism in Israel to fight for and hold their own, when they were fast losing their land, and when all the east of the Jordan was gone. His vigilance, his insight, his energy, and his faith did much to save the people and the land.

Advising, helping and inspiring wherever he went, the end of the good man came at last. King Jehoshaphat, of whom we shall hear later, sat crying at the bedside where the great man lay dying. At this last moment of his life Elisha gave him precious counsel as to the fate of his nation, urging zeal and assuring success. The king, with sorrowful affection, called him by a title that Elisha had addressed to his own master at the last parting:

"My father, my father, the chariots and the horsemen of Israel."

For was he not to Israel a host in himself? Aye, his influence among his people was mightier than 'he that taketh a city.' For he was one of the leaders of Israel in their spiritual conquest of the world, and, under such inspiring example, what wonder that moral victory—the victory of right over wrong, the victory of God against Baal—became theirs at last! He had neither office nor means; he was revered and mourned for himself, for the greatness of his soul. Verily, when his master's "mantle fell upon his shoulders," he was gifted with a "double portion of his spirit."

Years after, people were fond of telling how the mere contact of the bones of Elisha once brought the dead to life. Is not this like the story of Elijah, that he never died? I am sure that when the people recalled the inspiring words and the generous deeds of Elisha, they gave new life and new courage to those who heard them, though the prophet had been long since in his grave.

Did the people trust Elisha because he could do wonders for them?

NOTES FOR TEACHERS AND ADVANCED PUPILS.

"Naaman was great, honorable, a mighty man of valor, but he was a leper." How many are found with shining qualities, yet always some unfortunate "if" to spoil it all! Give examples.

Leprosy is a terrible disease, comparatively rare to-day, and in Western lands almost unknown. The Hebrew sanitary laws to prevent the spread of contagious disease, with all the details of isolation and the burning of infected garments, were wonderfully planned including every precaution. We marvel at them to-day. Read Lev. xiii.

The captive Jewish maid who gave valuable advice to her foreign master reminds us of the captive Jewish lad, Joseph, in the earlier pages of the Bible story.

Elisha's independence reminds us of Abraham's. He would not take a "shoe-latchet" of the people he befriended.

Gehazi, servant of Elisha copied neither his master's nobility nor his independence. He hated to think that the fine present offered by Naaman should go back to Syria. So he hastened after Naaman, and on some pretended need persuaded him to hand him part of the money. How many there are who value talents of silver more than uprightness of soul.

Some think the poisonous plant was the colocynth, mistaken for the lemon.

We know that none of the marvels ascribed to Elisha could have happened in the way related, for that would be impossible. But people of those days, when laws of nature were very little understood, did not know that God has set unbroken rules for all things, and that nothing can act contrary to the nature that He has implanted in it for the best and wisest purposes. They were not aware of any dividing line between the natural and the supernatural. Everything was possible to these simple people, just as everything seems possible to a child. And so in telling from mouth to mouth these stories of Elisha, they became more wonderful each time they were repeated, reaching even to the miraculous, when, in process of time, all remembrance of the man was dim and shadowy. Many of these stories may have grown out of Elisha's traveling from place to place looking after the welfare of the people, soothing them in their sorrows, entering into their simple pleasures, pleading their cause before kings, and then working and living with them as one of themselves. And so every one looked forward to the coming of the prophet: he always brought cheer. Surely the holy man of God could do whatever he willed!

It is said that a monument was placed on Elisha's grave at Samaria.

The wood-cutter was more concerned about the loss of a borrowed axe than had it been his own. We should guard most carefully the property of others intrusted to us.



WOODEN OX-CART.

CHAPTER X.

JEHU'S CONSPIRACY.

BIBLE TEXT: "Have we not all one father? Has not one God created us all? Why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, profaning the covenant of our fathers?" *Malachi ii. 10.*

Toward the end of Joram's twelve-year reign, we find him fighting against the Syrians again, to regain Ramoth-Gilead, in the first struggle for which Ahab had lost his life. Hazael had smothered his master Benhadad and had seized the Syrian throne; and Joram found him a fierce and relentless opponent. It is true that Ramoth-Gilead was won back, but Joram was severely wounded in the engagement, and was sent back, an invalid, to Jezreel, with small hope of recovery. Thinking their monarch might be near death, the soldiers began to consider the question of a successor. Did they wish another descendant of the house of Omri? No. The prophet party wanted to place on the throne a king more zealous for the God of Israel than any descendant of that house had so far shown himself.

A conspiracy was quickly formed. The Northern Kingdom always had been the hot-bed of conspiracy. The armies of Israel were still at the walls of Ramoth-Gilead when the captains, at the urgency of a prophet who suddenly appeared upon the scene, declared their general JEHU, grandson of Nimshi,

their king. Spreading their cloaks on the steps, that Jehu might stand upon them, in token of their realty, they blew the trumpet and shouted, "Jehu is king." "Now," said the crafty and cruel Jehu, "if this be your wish, let none escape to Jezreel to tell the news to the wounded king Joram."

AHAZIAH was king of Judah at this time. He was nephew of the Ahaziah who had been king of Israel, and was, therefore, nephew to Joram also. So he came north to visit his sick kinsman. Jehu, accompanied by a retinue of followers, crossed the Jordan and drove to Jezreel, fifty miles from Ramoth-Gilead, in that furious haste for which he was so much celebrated, and which has given his name to drivers in general. His wild driving may have shown what a reckless man he was. King Joram was sitting with his nephew in the royal palace when the watchman on the tower cried, "I see a company approaching." "Send a messenger on horseback," said Joram, "to ask is it peace"—*i. e.*, "Is it well." When the messenger reached Jehu and asked, "Is it peace?" Jehu replied, "What hast thou to do with peace? Fall in behind me."

The watchman reported that the messenger returned not. Another was sent, and was retained by Jehu in the same way. The watchman reported this also, adding that the furious driving was evidently that of Jehu, the fast driver. "Prepare my chariot," said the sick king, thinking something must have

happened. So Joram and Ahaziah of Judah went forth in their chariots to meet Jehu.

"Is it peace, Jehu?" innocently asked the king "What peace can there be," said Jehu, "as long as the shameful sins of your mother Jezebel continue?" Joram turned to flee, crying in warning to Ahaziah, "Treachery!" But Jehu drew his bow with full force and shot the king through the heart. Turning to his captain, Bilcar, he said: "Cast the body in the field of Naboth, whom his father Ahab murdered." Ahaziah of Judah now fled, too. "Smite him," thundered Jehu. He fled as far as Megiddo, and there fell. He was carried home to his capital, at Jerusalem, and buried in the sepulchre of David. Thus the kings of both Israel and Judah fell in one day.

But Jehu's bloodthirsty work had only just commenced. The shameless Jezebel, with painted face, looked out of the palace window, and knowing that all was lost now, shouted defiantly at Jehu, "Ha! thou Zimri, thy master's murderer." (Zimri had also slain his master and seized the throne. See chap. ii.) "Throw her down," cried out Jehu to the servants behind her. They instantly obeyed the new king. This was the end of the woman who had been the ruin of Ahab's house.

Having overawed Jezreel and Samaria, Jehu sent word to the elders that they could appoint a king from the royal family if they wished, but that he would have to fight for his throne. Naturally, they

made no such attempt, and promised to serve Jehu. He promptly put them to the test, and ordered them to slay all the members of the royal house. This was always the first work of a usurper in order to crush opposition, though he took care to express innocence of it to the people. To make his throne still more secure, he also put to death the court officials, priests, and friends of the old dynasty. On his way to Samaria, he came across a company of the brethren of Ahaziah of Judah, who, ignorant of what had happened, were on a peaceful visit to the royal family. They, too, were slain, all because of their relation to the doomed house of Ahab.

Finally, by a stratagem, he discovered all of the people who still worshiped the idolatrous Baal. He told them he intended serving Baal more faithfully than Ahab. He then gathered all the idolaters to the Baal sacrifice, clothed them in special Baal vestments, even threatening those who refused to come. When the temple was crowded with them, he ordered his body-guard to put them to the sword. The Baal temple was degraded and its idols burned. But we cannot read this painful story without feeling that there is something even worse than Baal worship.

Even if we suppose that Jehu did this out of pure but mistaken worship of God, and not merely to gain the approval of the prophetic party, we cannot pardon his cruel massacres. Right was never reached

through wrong. Religion is never furthered by persecution. Jehu, even if sincere, missed the spirit of Elijah's ideal aim. But was he sincere? Listen to these words:

"Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of God with all his heart, and departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, wherewith he made Israel to sin, namely, the golden calves that were in Bethel and Dan."

We see, then, after all, he cared more for the crown than for the Eternal. He used the zeal of the prophets only as means to further his worldly ambition. We can hardly think Elisha approved of such bloodshed, although his name is associated with the revolution; for later he speaks of Jehu as a murderer. We know that a later prophet, Hosea, condemned it:

"I will visit the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu and cause the kingdom to cease."

Still, although God was worshiped under the symbol of Jeroboam's bulls all through Jehu's reign, Baal worship never again gained the dangerous ascendancy it held in the reign of Ahab.

Dare we deceive those whose religion we think wicked?

NOTES FOR TEACHERS AND ADVANCED PUPILS.

Give instances in history of the spiritual failure of many so-called religious movements, such as The Crusades.

We are told that Jonadab, the son of Rechab, a Kenite a man of great influence, approved of the bitter way in which Jehu put

down Baal worship. This Jonadab was a religious man, but, unfortunately, of the fanatic type. He was the founder of a sect named after his native place, Rechabites though Elisha is sometimes called its founder. They were ascetics, living a wandering life in the wilderness, refraining from wine and having no settled occupation. They were still in existence in the days of Jeremiah (Jeremiah xxxv. 6). A similar sect appeared some centuries later, called Essenes. But asceticism was never popular among the Jews. See "Nazarites," vol. i., page 147; vol. ii., page 73.

THE HOUSE OF JEHU.—(*Israel.*)

JEHU—842 B. C. E.

JEHOAHAZ—814.

JEHOASH—797.

JEROBOAM II.—781.

ZECHARIAH—743.

CHAPTER XI.

ISRAEL'S VARYING FORTUNES.

BIBLE TEXT: "Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress; have mercy upon me and hear my prayer."

Psalm iv. 1.

Jehu's reign was by no means prosperous. Hazael, unlike king Benhadad, whom he slew, became a powerful monarch of Syria. He undid all the successes of Ahab. He ravaged Israel as she had never been ravaged before. On the east of the Jordan he devastated the lands of Gilead and Bashan, which partly covered the territory of the Menassites, the

Gadites, and the Reubenites. And all these defeats were accompanied by terrific and wanton cruelty upon helpless women and children, too terrible even to tell.

But Jehu also came in passing contact with a power far more terrible than the Syrians—the ASSYRIANS. (Their names sound alike, but they must not be confused; the more correct name of Syrian was Aramean, Hebrew—*Aram*.) But for the present, the meeting was only momentary. Jehu may have paid tribute to one of its kings, Shalmaneser II. This fact, at least, is inscribed on a black obelisk which tells the deeds of this monarch. But it may have been only a present sent to induce Assyria to attack Syria.

After a reign of twenty-eight years, Jehu was succeeded by JEHOAHAZ. The new king inherited with his father's crown all his father's difficulties, for Hazael continued his conquests at the expense of Israel, "crushing them like dust." At one time he left Jehoahaz only fifty horsemen, ten chariots, and ten thousand infantry. Nor did Hazael's death bring them peace, for his son, Benhadad III., continued the war with all his father's cruelty, though he lacked the energy and power of Hazael. The war fluctuated and the Israelites gained an occasional victory, but it seemed as though the nation was doomed.

They suffered dreadfully during the years of siege.

Before gunpowder was invented, wars would languish many years. A general would sit down with his army outside the walls of a city, and wait months and months till the inhabitants were starved into submission, so that famine would always be a part of war. The disheartened king, who did what he could to help his subjects, put on sackcloth as a sign of sorrow ; but he could do little, for "the barn-floor was empty and the wine-press was dry." Bands of Moabites took advantage of Israel's helpless condition to cross the Jordan and ravage the country. During the siege an ass's head sold for eighty shekels (about \$40). Even refuse was sold and eagerly devoured. A story is told of two women, crazed by famine, eating their own children !

Elisha, who was still alive, was in Samaria at the time of the siege, consoling and counseling the people and keeping up their courage for resistance. The elders of the city eagerly sought his advice, and that the king reproached him for bringing no help shows what faith he put in his power. He was, indeed, the leading spirit during this sad time.

But a change came. Four men suffering from leprosy were shut out from the city of Samaria to prevent contagion. They, too, were starving. At last they ventured toward the enemy's camp. At worst they could but die, they said to each other, while they might find some remnants of food and escape. What was their surprise when, stealing into

the Syrian camp at night, to find it deserted! A noise had been heard, and the Syrians had cried in alarm: "Ha! what is that? The Israelites have hired against us the Hittites and the Egyptians. Let us flee." So the leprous men found that they had left everything behind them in their hasty flight, their tents, their horses, their asses, the whole camp as it was. Immediately the lepers satisfied their hunger and began taking some of the booty, but they soon began to think of their distressed brethren in Samaria.

"We do not well; this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace. Come, let us go and tell the king's household."

So they ran to tell the joyful news. The king was aroused. At first he was suspicious. Perhaps it was a ruse of the Syrians who were in hiding to draw them out of the city and to attack them when off their guard. A few scouts were therefore sent out in chariots to investigate. They followed the retreat of the Syrians, which could be easily traced from the scattered arms and baggage along the route as far as the Jordan. It was all true, then. The people rushed from the city to seize the food that was now in abundance. A captain who had given up all hope of deliverance lost his life in the crush. There was plenty now. "A measure of fine flour could be bought for a shekel."

It was not the Hittites nor the Egyptians that

scared away the Syrians, but more probably the Assyrians whom we have just mentioned. Had it not been for their timely intervention, this chapter might have closed the history of the Northern Kingdom. But Assyria saved Israel now, only to complete its downfall about a hundred years later.

Jehoahaz was succeeded by his son, JEHOASH, after a reign of seventeen years. This name is sometimes spelled Joash, but as there was a king of that name on the throne of Judah at the same time, we will retain the longer spelling for the sake of distinction, as we did in the case of the two Jehorams. The fortunes of Israel now began to change. It was Syria's turn to be defeated. In every engagement with Jehoash they got the worst of it, and gradually he won back all the territory that had been wrested from Israel. Nor were the Syrians in a condition to aid Judah's old enemies,—Ammon, Moab, and Edom—for the hand of Assyria was heavy upon them, too. Jehoash had great reverence for Elisha, submitted to his counsel, was with him at his death-bed, and ordered Gehazi to write down the deeds of his lamented master.

The foolish attempt of Amaziah of Judah to overthrow Israel and his complete defeat at the hands of Jehoash will be told in the story of Judah. Jehoash here showed great forbearance to Amaziah, perhaps due to the influence of the gentle Elisha.

The warlike Jehoash was succeeded by his son,

Jeroboam, called JEROBOAM II. to distinguish him from the Jeroboam who was the first king of the seceding Ten Tribes. The kingdom was now much larger than it had been for some time, but he extended its limits further still. All that had been taken by Syria was won back again: even its capital, Damascus, was taken, and the boundaries of Jeroboam's extended kingdom once more reached from the distant Hamath, on the Orontes, close to the Euphrates on the north, to the Dead Sea on the south, just at the border line of Edom and Moab—the district called the Arabah (Arabian desert). But Moab also soon adds to his dominions, having defeated it more completely than ever before. In despair, Moab sought the aid of Judah, but was rebuffed. Jeroboam II. was perhaps the greatest conqueror since David. The empire of Solomon was almost restored, and Israel was regaining something of its old prestige. Civil war in Tyre increased its trade, and wealth poured in from all sides.

Of course, these easy and far-reaching victories over Syria were largely due to the onslaughts of the Assyrians. They had been growing in power for centuries, and were reaching in their march of conquest with sure and deadly steps the boundaries of Syria and Canaan. Israel is left alone for the present; Syria only is feeling its iron hand; but Israel's turn will come.

Does war justify cruelty?

NOTES FOR TEACHERS AND ADVANCED PUPILS.

Elisha had wept at the dreadful things he feared the cruel Hazael would do. "What?" cried Hazael; "am I a dog that I should do such things?" Alas! he did them in spite of his declaration of righteousness.

The Syrians had ascribed their attack to the Hittites. The Hittites, by-the-way, were one of the most powerful peoples of Palestine, especially before the Israelites came there. At one time they defeated the Egyptians. We have learned more about them in modern times. See Sayce's "Hittites."

As to what the Assyrians under Shalmaneser II. did to the Syrians, see Geikie's "Hours with the Bible," vol. iv., pages 177-180.

JUDAH.

REHOBAM—937.

ABIJAH—920.

ASA—917.

JEHOSHAPHAT—876-851.

CHAPTER XII.

CONFLICT BETWEEN THE RIVAL KINGS.

BIBLE TEXTS: "He loveth transgression that loveth strife."

Prov. xvii 19.

"The king by justice establisheth the land."

Prov. xxix. 4.

To follow the fortunes of Judah we will have to go back to the beginning again—to the division of the kingdom and Rehoboam's coronation. REHOBAM was forty-one when he lost the allegiance of the Ten Tribes and found his kingdom shrivelled to one or two tribes in the south. In the second

chapter of this book we have already been told of Egypt's invasion of Judah and of Rehoboam's quarrels with his rival, Jeroboam I. In religious matters Rehoboam took an indifferent position, worshipping the God of his fathers in a way, yet tolerating many of those superstitious rites that were still popular in Israel and that continued to be popular for some time to come. When we have said that the name of Rehoboam's mother was Naamah, an Ammonitess, and that he reigned seventeen years, we have said all there is to tell.

ABIJAH, his son, was similar in character to his father, but more warlike. With his small resources, he ventured to attack Israel and won some victories. Indeed, the whole of the three years of his reign was consumed in wars with Jeroboam, which have been compared to the wars of rival states in Greece. This is all we know of him. The Bible refers us here, as it does in nearly every reign of the dynasty, to the "Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah" for further details. But all we know of this book is just this continued reference to it. The "Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel," to which we are correspondingly referred for particulars of Israel's kings, is likewise unfortunately lost.

When Abijah died, his mother, Maachah (a granddaughter of Absalom), became regent—that is, temporary ruler—during the childhood of her younger son ASA, though she had exercised a good deal of

power as queen-mother while Abijah lived. She was a woman of strong character and also of great beauty, and had she used her powers for good instead of for evil, she might have helped the cause of Judah. As it was, she encouraged those shameful practices that were the saddest consequences of ancient idolatry.

But when Asa reached manhood and took the reins of power, he suppressed the abuses of his mother with a firm hand. It is always unfortunate when a son is compelled to sit in judgment on his own parent. But Asa was religiously inclined—as much as that meant in those days—and knew that his example would influence the whole nation. He made the temple and the capital a religious centre in a truer sense than they had been in the days of Solomon, and invested the priests with more importance.

The wars between Israel and Judah continued to wage as fiercely as in the days of Rehoboam and Abijah. Baasha, the usurper, was reigning in Israel when Asa came to the throne. Baasha tried to conquer Israel altogether. A great military road that led from Jerusalem to the north passed through Ramah, Samuel's old home, six miles north of Jerusalem. At this important point Baasha had built a fortress which would command a view of all Judah, and manned it with troops. This stratagem compelled many of the southern districts to unite with

Israel, and cut off Judah from all commercial intercourse with the north. It was also intended to prevent any desertions from Israel to Judah. But Asa did not propose to remain quietly shut up in his kingdom like a prisoner. This fortress was much too near his capital for comfort; it was practically a blockade. He sought an ally. Syria was always on hand to play fast and loose with North and South, making use of the weakness of both sides. Asa took what was left in his treasury, after Rehoboam had paid ransom to Shishak, and sent a deputation with this gold and silver to the king of Syria, Benhadad, son of Tabrimmon, whose royal residence was at Damascus, asking for assistance against Baasha, for the sake of the old friendship existing between their fathers. But it was a dangerous experiment to seek the aid of such an intriguing power. Benhadad, caring very little for old friendship but a good deal for old gold (for his relations with Israel were equally friendly), sent an army against Israel and attacked many of its cities. Baasha, in alarm, abandoned the building of the fortress of Ramah, and hastened back to Tirzah to look after his own territory. Asa now summoned his people to destroy the fortress of Ramah, and to gather the stone and timber and use it to fortify Geba of Benjamin and Mizpeh. Thus what might have been the menace of Judah became its defense against future Northern invasion.

But the prophets liked not this alliance with Syria, and denounced it.

Were it not for these wars of Baasha, Asa's reign would have been very prosperous. As it was, he defeated an African invasion under Zerah, an Ethiopian (perhaps urged on by Baasha), and followed up his success by pursuing the Arabs in Gerar. After a reign of forty-one years, he died of a disease in his feet—perhaps gout—and was succeeded by his son, JEHOSHAPHAT.

If Abijah had inherited his father's religious indifference, certainly Jehoshaphat inherited his father's religious zeal. He was even more energetic than Asa in promoting religious reforms, though in this work they are generally classed together. The immoral practices that grow out of idolatry were put down with a firm hand. Notice how completely religion and state were combined in ancient times, so that the form of worship and the religious practices were almost entirely decided by the king. Jehoshaphat enlarged the temple, and furthered his father's work in making it a great religious centre. He did his best, too, to spread education and tried to improve the administration of justice. Maachah, his grandmother, whom Asa, with a son's indulgent forbearance, had never quite deposed, and who exerted a baneful influence on the nation—as wickedness practiced in high station always does—was shorn of all royal power by Jehoshaphat, and her

disgusting images were burned. No doubt some unknown prophet inspired Asa and Jehoshaphat in this religious reformation. But it must not be considered a complete reform; that did not come till years later. The people were not yet ripe enough to give up every vestige of idolatry and superstition. Great ideas develop slowly.

It is said, too, in another book of the Bible, the book of Chronicles, that Jehoshaphat set up judges throughout the land and gave them this advice:

“Consider well what ye do; ye judge not for man, but for God, who is with you in the judgment. Now therefore let the fear of God be upon you; take heed in all ye do, for there is no unrighteousness with God, nor respect of persons nor taking of bribes.”

Unlike the kings before him, Jehoshaphat had peaceful and friendly relations with Israel. You have already been told of his visit to Ahab, of their common wars against the Syrians, and later against the Moabites. Nor did the king neglect the commercial interests of his little nation. He strengthened his borders against foreign foes; and through the vassalage of Edom, over whom he gained a fuller mastery, he was able to extend his trade right through their land to the Gulf of Elath, far down in the South, thus opening up to him the whole peninsula of Sinai. The Philistines were also kept in subjection. Like Solomon, he built fortresses, castles, and store-cities, and appointed young princes

over them. The army was better organized and the land better protected. Like Solomon again, he made ships of Tarshish to sail to Ophir for gold. But these ships were wrecked on a ledge of rocks in the dangerous harbor of Ezion-geber, which leads out into the Red Sea. Ahaziah, king of Israel, wished to join Jehoshaphat in some trade voyages, but Jehoshaphat declined, discouraged by the loss of his ships. So this revival of trade was only spasmodic after all.

Who was the truer patriot, Asa, enemy of Israel, or Jehoshaphat, its ally?

NOTES FOR TEACHERS AND ADVANCED PUPILS.

Ships of Tarshish, see vol. ii., chap liii. Some one has pointed out that the custom of naming ships by the distant port to which they usually travel is still in vogue—*Indiaman*.

Some put the Egyptians behind the Ethiopian attack against Asia, indicating that Zerah, in fact, was an Egyptian and not an Ethiopian at all.

As there was but one dynasty in Judah, the kings cannot be arranged in different Houses. But they are divided through the book into small groups, so that they may be more easily learned.



CAMELS BROUGHT AS TRIBUTE TO SHALMANESER.,

See page 136.

KINGS OF JUDAH.

JEHORAM—851. AHAZIAH—843.

ATHALIAH—842. JOASH—836.

AMAZIAH—796—786.

CHAPTER XIII.

ATHALIAH.

BIBLE TEXT: "Those who plow iniquity and sow mischief shall reap the same." *Job iv. 8.*

Jehoshaphat was succeeded by JEHORAM. So at about the same time there were two Jehorams reigning, one in Judah and one in Israel, only we have used the shorter name, Joram, for the Israelitish king. Jehoshaphat had left rich legacies, including fortified cities in the territory of Judah, to all his sons, giving to Jehoram the throne. But Jehoram slew his brothers, perhaps to get possession of their estates. As his wife had complete influence over him, we are not surprised at his cruelty, for he had married Athaliah, daughter of Jezebel, who, like her mother, was unscrupulous and hard-hearted. This marriage undid all the good work accomplished in the kingdom by Asa and Jehoshaphat. What a different man he was from his father and grandfather.

He reigned for eight years, marked by nothing but reverses. The Edomites broke away from their vassalage under which the firm hand of Jehoshaphat

had brought them, and took a king to themselves. Jehoram gathered an army and defeated them in the mountains at Zair, but he had to retreat by night; he was unable to make them tributary again. Libnah, between the mountains of Judah and the Mediterranean coast, the last Canaanite city, rebelled at the same time. We are also told that he suffered reverses from the Philistines and Arabs. He was succeeded by AHAZIAH, whom you have been told was slain by Jehu when visiting his uncle. We have nothing to tell of his reign, which lasted but one year. He had really no time given him to show what he might do.

When the news of Jehu's overthrow of her father's house reached the ears of ATHALIAH, this fierce and heartless woman took a cruel and terrible revenge. As Jehu had destroyed every remnant of Omri's family, so would she kill every living scion of the house of David. That this meant the destruction of her own grandchildren, did not shake her determination. Soon the terrible deed was done. In this way she seized the throne and held it. While Jehu in the North overthrew Baal, Athaliah in the South discouraged the worship of the God of Israel and did her best to spread idolatry. It was the baneful influence of Maachah over again. The morals of the people sunk low. Things continued in this way for six years.

Now, there was one son of Ahaziah, named Joash,

who had escaped the avenging hand of Athaliah. He had been hidden by his aunt, a daughter of Jehoram, in the "bed chamber of the palace" among the mattresses that were kept in store there. Then Jehoiada, the chief priest, took charge of him secretly in the temple; for the temple had three stories of smaller rooms on two sides. Here he perhaps passed as the priest's son. The Temple guardians, called Carians—a royal body-guard like the Cherethites and Pelethites of David—had become interested in the boy and carefully protected him. All this was done in great secrecy, for everyone feared the powerful Athaliah, who let nothing stand in the way of her wicked purposes.

By about the seventh year of Athaliah's reign, Jehoiada's plans for restoring the rightful heir to the throne, were completed. So he told the guards on a certain Sabbath, when one half of them were relieved and the other half took their places, they should guard every palace gate and allow none to enter. There were three sections of the guard; the first was to take up its station at the porch of the palace; the second, at what was called the gate of the foundation; the third, at the gate of "the runners." All were to retain the irregular places to avoid suspicion. He then delivered to the captains of the guard the spears and shields that had been in the Temple treasury. Each man stood with weapon in hand ready for the emergency. The hour to strike had arrived.

Then Jehoiada brought forth young Joash, poured the consecrating oil upon his head and placed upon it the royal crown, studded with jewels, and handed him "the testimony," *i. e.*, part of the Law. The officers clapped their hands and shouted "God save the King."

The noise of the rejoicing reached the apartments of the Queen. She hurried out, always on the alert for betrayal, as guilty people are. She took in the whole scene at a glance. The young king standing by the pillar with Jehoiada proudly beside him; the Temple full of soldiers guarding the royal person, the blowing trumpets, the shouting and the rejoicings of the people. Tearing her clothes she shouted "Treason, treason," just as her brother Joram of Israel had shouted "treachery," when Jehu betrayed him. "Let her pass," said the priest, "and let none slay her in the Temple of the Lord." So they made way for the dethroned queen; but when she reached the royal stables a guardsman slew her.

Her fate was as awful as that of her mother Jezebel, the Phœnician, who had brought such trouble to Israel.

Is there any defence for Athaliah's slaughter of the royal family?

NOTES FOR TEACHERS AND ADVANCED PUPILS.

Speaking of Jehoram's evil ways, Scripture says, "Yet the Lord would not destroy Judah for David, His servant's sake, as He

promised to give unto him a lamp for his children always." This same passage had been repeated two or three times before, (2 Samuel vii. 16; 1 Kings xi. 6; 1 Kings xv. 4). In every tent hung a lamp that was never allowed to go out, typical of the endurance of the home. Hence its use in this phrase. So later "light" was used as a figure for life. The burning of the light on the anniversary of a death of a relative—"Jahrzeit"—is a use of the same symbol.

How great is the influence of woman both for good and for evil! A woman introduces idolatry in Israel and a woman introduces it in Judah. See notes, pages 45 and 50, vol. ii.

A Greek tragedy of Euripides tells of a woman, Medæa, who killed her children to be revenged on her husband, reminding us of Athaliah.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE RISING POWER OF THE PRIESTS.

BIBLE TEXT: "The law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet."

Jeremiah xviii 18.

The death of the queen meant a change in the religious status of Judah. Jehoiada had exhorted the people to be true to God and registered their vow in a sacrifice; the Baal house was overthrown, its images were shattered, while Mattan, the Baal priest, was slain. Jehoiada in suppressing idolatry in Judah, showed nothing of the wanton cruelty of Jehu in Israel, but then it had not taken such deep root in the southern kingdom.

All then seemed as it should be when JOASH began to reign. But we must not be too satisfied with

externals. Were the people so much better religiously after the Baal temple was overthrown and Solomon's temple had become more popular? A change of temple does not always mean a change of heart. Many may have worshiped God after a fashion and yet have been touched with nothing of His spirit, laying all importance on the animal sacrifice.

Joash, being but seven years of age when he reached the throne, the control of the nation fell into the hands of Jehoiada and the priests, and they naturally took this opportunity of strengthening their power. As the restorers of the royal succession, too, they enjoyed a certain importance. Now, when too much material power is left in the hands of priests, the cause of religion always suffers. Why? Well, they become careless and self-indulgent, as did Hophni and Phineas in the days of Eli. They begin to care more for their perquisites of tithes and offerings than for the religious condition of the people. They often get entangled in political quarrels, and sometimes even use their official power to further conspiracy. All of these things now occurred.

When Joash took the government entirely in his own hands, at about the age of twenty-three, he noticed certain abuses that he decided to put down. All donations of money that were sent to the Temple for offerings or vows, or atonement gifts, were supposed sufficient to support the priests and also to maintain the temple and keep it in repair. This last

duty the priests neglected, keeping all the gifts for themselves; and so the temple was in a bad condition. We may be sure that Athaliah's reign did not improve things. Joash, therefore, ordered a money-box made with a hole in the lid, and had it placed in the entrance of the Temple for the depositing of money from certain offerings; reminding us of the charity boxes seen in our modern temples to-day. This did not please the priests, though Jehoiada seemed to approve of it; but he naturally supported Joash, his protege, in all his measures. After a time the money was taken out and counted and used to repair the temple. The wood and stone work was strengthened and renewed, but there was not enough to refurnish the Temple with silver vessels.

So much for affairs at home. The outlook was not very brilliant abroad. For having severely ravaged the Northern Kingdom in the reign of Jehu, Hazael of Syria now turned his arms against Judah. He wrested Gath from their hands and restored it to the Philistines, and then approached Jerusalem. Joash feared to continue the war with a king who, in a few years, had grown so dangerously powerful, so he bought off the Syrian power, as Asa had done, with the gold that had been put in the treasury by previous kings.

When Jehoiada died, Joash attacked the abuses of the priests more vigorously than ever. While the old priest was alive, a feeling of gratitude restrained

him from being as severe upon the priests as he desired. Indeed, he hardly dared. Jehoiada was so influential, that his approval was the king's strongest support. At his death, Joash felt the difference. The priests and their allies were all against him. At last Zachariah, a son of Jehoiada, started a revolt, and was in consequence put to death. This increased the bitterness against Joash. A conspiracy was formed to kill him, which unfortunately succeeded. But such was the reverence for the house of David, that the people placed on the throne a son of the king who had been slain; so Judah never had a change of dynasty.

AMAZIAH, the new king, while punishing his father's murderers, departed from the ancient barbaric custom of killing their children also:

"According to that which is written in the book of the law of Moses, the father shall not be put to death for the children, nor the children put to death for the father; but every man shall be put to death for his own sin."
(Deut. xxiv. 16.)

This indicates that the sense of humanity was growing, for such kindness was not practiced in those days. He determined to subdue the Edomites again, who, you will remember, broke away in the reign of Jehoram some fifty years before. He gathered a large army, and was so successful in his campaign against them in the Valley of Salt that he succeeded even in taking their capital, Selah, though

it stood on a rocky precipice four thousand feet above the Mediterranean (from which it derived its name, *Selah*, rock). Its name was now changed to Joktheel, which means "Subdued by God."

He was so elated at his success against Edom that, instead of following it up by peaceful expeditions on the Red Sea toward India, as the enterprising Solomon would have done, he unwisely decided to bring to an end the peace and good will that had existed between Israel and Judah since the days of Omri, and to reopen the old war. So he sent to King Jehoash this challenge: "Come, let us look each other in the face" (test our power). In reply the king of Israel sent back this message:

"The thistle said to the cedar, Give thy daughter to my son for a wife, and there passed by a wild beast and trod down the thistle. Thou hast indeed smitten Edom, and thine heart hath lifted thee up; glory in this, but tarry at home. Why meddle to thy hurt and fall, and bring down Judah with thee?"

But the hot-headed Amaziah was hardly likely to listen to this advice so contemptuously given, and a battle took place at Beth-shemesh, in Judah, some sixteen miles from Jerusalem. The men of Judah fled to their tents, utterly routed. The temple was despoiled of its precious vessels, the walls of Jerusalem were broken down as though by some foreign conqueror, and Judah was not permitted to rebuild them. King Amaziah was taken prisoner. So his

victory over Edom became the snare that almost lost him his crown.

Laden with precious booty from the Temple, and having some Judæan nobles as hostages in his train, Jehoash returned in triumph to Samaria. He might have completed the conquest of Judah and made it part of his kingdom, but he generously allowed it to continue as a vassal. Later on Judah was given its independence back again.

But this foolhardy attempt made Amaziah unpopular, and a conspiracy was formed to slay him. He fled to Lachish, among the hills of Judah, but his enemies pursued him there and slew him. The dead king was brought back to Jerusalem and buried in the royal sepulchre. So father and son had both died by violence. Such doings remind us more of the turmoils of the Northern Kingdom.

In the account of Israel's kings we have spoken mostly of the prophets, while in the history of Judah, so far, we have had to do chiefly with priests. What was the difference between a priest and a prophet? While both were in their way devoted to the cause of religion, there was a marked distinction in their methods. The priest was usually attached to the Temple from which he received his support. or was connected with the local sanctuaries, the "high places" scattered through the country. The religious duty of the priest then being centred in a

shrine of some sort, he naturally laid much importance upon its impressive services and its outward forms, upon rituals, sacrifices, and tithes, upon written laws and ancient customs. The prophet was connected with no particular temple and cared little for its formalities. He preached God as the inspiration came upon him. He cared only for the spirit and nothing for the letter. He ridiculed sacrifices and pleaded for justice and morality. So, while the priests laughed at the prophet as a visionary, the prophet condemned the priest as a stickler for ceremonial. On the other hand, it must be said that some of the so-called professional prophets were worldly and lacked noble ideals, while, again, some of the nobler priests were devoted and faithful to religion as they understood it, were supporters of law and order, and helped to preserve many valuable records and still more valuable laws. They were, to a great extent, teachers of the people, and decided many of their religious differences. Some were righteous and some were corrupt. The difference lay, then, less in the office than in the man. Is it not always so? But we must now make a closer study of the prophets.

How may religious ceremonial influence our spiritual life?

NOTES FOR TEACHERS AND ADVANCED PUPILS.

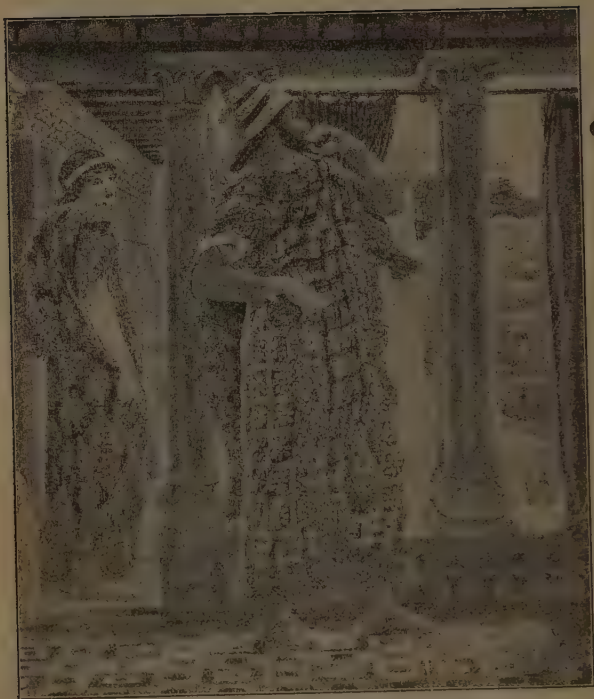
A famous general once said: "Another such victory and we are undone." Like Amaziah, sometimes our success is our great-

est misfortune, where failure might have been a blessing. Can you recall other such instances in history?

Apropos of what has been said of the priests, mark this warning of Malachi: "Now, O ye priests, if ye will not hear, if ye will not lay it to heart to give glory to my name, saith the Lord of Hosts, then will I curse your blessings."



REHOBOAM AND THE YOUNG MEN.
See page 11.



AHAB COVETING NABOTH'S VINEYARD.

See page 26.

BOOK II.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE PROPHETS.

CHAPTER XV.

THEIR WORK IN GENERAL.

BIBLE TEXT: "I will raise them up a prophet. . . . I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I command him."

Deuteronomy xviii. 18.

In the second volume we considered the growth of prophecy under the directing care of Samuel (chap. xxxi., The Prophet School). It is very necessary that the work of these inspired men should be thoroughly understood, for they were much more important than the kings. Indeed, this history of ours is a great history largely, because it contains the doings and teachings of these servants of God. On their account chiefly the world treasures the history of the Hebrews, while the histories of nations kindred to them—Moab, Edom, Ammon—are ignored and forgotten; or rather, they are remembered only when they are brought in contact with our ancestors. It is the prophetic interweaving of religious activity with every national undertaking that

makes the story of the past a sacred record and the book that tells it a sacred book—the Bible. For the same reason, the language which our fathers spoke is called a Holy Tongue, and the land in which they lived, a Holy Land.

“Prophet” does not mean foreteller of the future; that was not his vocation. A prophet was he who spoke God’s message to the people. Thus he became the preacher of right and truth, and the denouncer of wrong and error. Only a few of these prophets rose to the heights of moral grandeur, spurred on by the spirit of God; nevertheless, it is these few who gradually inspired the whole nation to make religion its mission to mankind, and raised them to a higher plane of conduct than the world had yet known. And because they made the *political* interests of their nation as nothing beside their *religious* interests, they decided the religious destiny of all humanity, from that time even unto this day.

They were not priests specially trained around the temples to conduct its rites, though some of them happened to be priests. More often they were the opponents of the priests, dissatisfied with their formalism, their narrowness, and their lack of spirituality. Nor, like the priests of a later day, did they belong to any one tribe. It is true that there were schools, or rather guilds, of prophets, many living together near the ancient sanctuaries, wearing a distinctive dress and prophesying in companies.

Remember the prophet groups in the Elisha stories. But the greatest of the prophets, whose writings are preserved, were not prophets by profession at all. This is but natural, for prophetic inspiration, like genius, cannot be studied, but is a rare gift from on high, bestowed, perhaps, on one or two souls in a century. Indeed, the genuine prophets, in the highest sense in which we use that word to-day, scornfully disclaimed the title of professional prophets. They were plain men, sometimes even poor and obscure ploughmen or shepherds, who did not speak for reward or to please royalty, but who felt the call of God within them, urging them to go forth and preach righteousness to the masses. And they would obey the inward voice, leaving everything and daring everything in their zeal for the Eternal.

Only the names and the teachings of some of them have been preserved, but these are sufficient to give us a complete idea of the work of the prophets as a whole, and to present to us in the pages of the Bible the development of those great truths toward which Moses first pointed the way. These truths are: *There is but one God, who is Father of us all; He loveth righteousness, and would have us love it, too.* But all this precious knowledge of God did not come at once; it was revealed slowly. So we shall find the religious ideas of the prophets of the eighth and seventh centuries loftier and purer **than** those of the prophets of the ninth century.

Their views often ran counter to public opinion, so that at times they were opposed not only by the nobility but even by the people. For instance, some felt and preached that a nation holding within itself the religious future of mankind must give up the hope of material greatness and at times even of national success. Again, their profound faith in the omnipresence of a righteous God led them to reject every alliance with a foreign power. It seemed traitorous to God, on whom alone they should rely. Most of them cared little for Israel's conquest of territory. They were impatient, perhaps to an unjust degree, with the arts, refinements and luxuries introduced from foreign lands. They were zealous only for the Lord of Hosts. They would have liked Israel to have remained a simple, pastoral people, worshipping God and practicing righteousness. Like all idealists, their theories were not always practical, and they did not make sufficient allowance for human nature and the weaknesses of mortal men. In their righteous indignation they often overstated Israel's sins. They were not as bad as the prophets painted them. But burning zeal will often depict in darker colors the evil it would uproot. Some persons cannot be roused from their indifference unless their shortcomings are brought before them in vivid and startling language. They wanted Israel to be so greatly superior to their surroundings that they censured them in proportion to the great expectations

they had for them. Therefore we must not suppose our ancestors as wicked as reading the Books of the Prophets might lead us to suppose. They were morally better than the people around them in that far-off age.

The kings, especially those who loved pleasure and were lax of duty, regarded the prophets as their natural enemies; and such was their power that at times they overturned a royal house and set up a new dynasty on the throne. They often prevented the kings indulging in despotic excesses and saved the people from becoming enslaved by princes and nobles. Yet at times they were a little too severe in their denunciation of wealth and luxury, perhaps, too, a little too extreme in their championship of the liberties and rights of the common people.

The sphere of their activity was very wide. They were the teachers, the patriots, the writers, the historians, the orators, the statesmen, as well as the ministers of their time. They taught by speech oftener than by writing, and by symbols oftener than by speech, that the simplest might understand.

A small body of the people, but steadily growing in numbers and power, was always on the side of the prophets, drinking in their teachings and striving to live up to their ideals. They were, of course, the most thoughtful and the most spiritual. It was in these staunch few that the prophets of a later day placed all their hopes for the future of the nation

At the darkest periods of their people's history, at those critical moments when the salvation of the nation hung in the balance, they never doubted the survival of "the remnant" who would preserve the truth of God and righteousness and take it down to ages.

Have we any prophets to-day?

NOTES FOR TEACHERS AND ADVANCED PUPILS.

The Bible itself hints at the growth of the prophet in telling us in the story of Samuel that the prophet was first called "seer," foreteller.

See "The Hebrew Prophets," Cornill; "The Prophets of Israel," Robertson Smith; "On the Prophets," Ewald. For further study, many works will be found dealing with the prophets individually. For a list of the prophets and their specific teachings, see Appendix to this volume.

CHAPTER XVI.

AMOS—GOD IS JUSTICE.

BIBLE TEXT: "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, unless He revealeth His secret unto His servants, the prophets."
Amos iii. 7.

We left Israel in the reign of Jeroboam II. in a condition of prosperity. The king had his summer and his winter palace, and had brought back again the splendors of Omri and Ahab. With conquest comes wealth; wealth brings luxury; luxury some-

times brings corruption. How brilliant this reign of Jeroboam seems from the outside! Let us look within.

Many country villages had grown into cities, and many of the evils that lurk in cities were found there. The character of the people was changing too. The rich had become richer, and the poor poorer. The gulf between them was widening. Following the not unusual consequences of the material progress of a nation, the peasant proprietors of small farms were wiped out by rich landowners. The poor even sold themselves as slaves to pay their debts or to be maintained. But the peasantry, not the nobility, form the backbone of a nation. "Ill fares the land to hastening ills a prey, when wealth accumulates and men decay." Already in Solomon's day the levies of forced labor tended to deprive the freemen of their farms. That was one of the reasons why Rehoboam was rejected by the Ten Tribes. Again, warrior bands would swoop down upon the peaceful Israelites in outlying farms, seizing their young children and selling them as slaves. This condition of oppression and injustice, coupled with extravagance and show, was always the prophet's opportunity.

The first great prophet of this time was AMOS. Suddenly and alone he appeared, like Samuel or Elijah, at the brilliant court of Bethel, where the first Jeroboam had set up the idol-calves. He appeared in the midst of a gay festival—perhaps to

those very idols—striking a discordant note in the merriment, by boldly denouncing idolatry and wantonness, and pleading the cause of the poor.

Who was Amos? A simple gatherer of sycamore fruit, a peasant in fact, from Tekoa, a small town near Bethlehem.. He considered the people of the North quite as much his brethren as those of the South. So, purposely going up to the Kingdom of the Ten Tribes to preach, he showed that, in spite of the Division, he regarded Israel and Judah as one nation, with one religious destiny. He was not a professional prophet; in fact, he despised that class, as we have already said the genuine prophets did. He felt simply the call of God, impelling him, though a poor shepherd, to go forth and preach—as he himself puts it—"The Lord God hath spoken, who shall not prophesy?" But still he was a cultivated man in what little scholarship the time afforded.

He saw that the teachings of Elijah were forgotten, or were never understood. Even when the people worshiped God, he said, they worshiped Him in an idolatrous sort of way, so that, to their minds, he was not so very different from Baal of the Phœnicians or Chemosh of the Moabites, but simply possessed more power. In his impassioned language, Amos tried to teach the people that the Eternal was the *sole* God, not of Israel, but of the universe; that not only the Israelites, but the Syrians and Moabites, were his children too, and that the supposed

gods of these nations were no gods at all, but simply delusions of their imagination.

They must not suppose that God cared only for them, or that He would defend them if they were wrong. Speaking in the name of God, as the prophets always did, he declares: "Ye are just the same as the Ethiopians to me, for though I delivered you from Egypt, I delivered other people too—the Philistines from Caphtor, the Syrians from Kir—your own enemies." Therefore, Amos calls the Eternal the "God of Hosts," never the "God of Israel."

God will punish Damascus for its barbarity to Gilead, the Philistines for taking the people captive, Tyre for its infamous slave-trade, Edom because it did "cast off all pity," Ammon for its cruelty to women, and Moab for its indignity to Edom. Nor will Judah be forgiven, for "they have rejected the law of the Lord;" nor Israel, who had "sold the righteous for silver and turned aside the way of the meek." He is the righteous Judge of all the earth, ignoring all national boundaries in condemning the wicked and rewarding the good, whether they recognize Him as God or not. Indeed, said Amos, just because the Israelites have been especially gifted with knowledge of God, for that reason should they be most severely punished for their sins.

"Ye only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore I will visit upon you all your iniquities "

And so he foresees the doom coming upon all these nations, upon Israel as upon its neighbors, as a necessary consequence of their sins. Retribution may be postponed, but it never fails.

What is the use, he cries, of your morning sacrifices, thank offerings and tithes, when the needy are neglected, when justice is changed to bitterness, the righteous betrayed, the reprover at the gate hated—while you are “stretched on beds of ivory” and “singing idle songs,” and “indulging in bribery, in immorality, and drunkenness, putting off the evil day?” Seeking God is seeking good. You cannot be religious if you are not moral.

Here are some extracts of his words :

Seek the Lord and ye shall live; but seek not the altars of Bethel and Gilgal.

Ye who turn judgment to wormwood, and leave off righteousness in the earth seek Him that maketh the Pleides and the Orion, and turneth the shadows of death into the morning, who maketh the day dark with night the Lord is His name.

Hate the evil, love the good, and establish judgment in the gate.

Forasmuch, therefore, as ye trample upon the poor,
And ye take from him exactions of wheat;

Ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them;

Ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink the wine thereof.

For I know how manifold are your transgressions and how mighty are your sins:

Ye that afflict the just, that take a bribe, and that turn aside the poor in the gate from their right.

Yea, though you offer me your burnt offerings and meal offerings, I will not accept them; neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts.

But let judgment roll down as waters,
And righteousness as a mighty stream.

Publish ye in the palaces at Ashdod, and in the palaces in the land of Egypt,

And say; Assemble yourselves upon the mountains of Samaria,
And behold what great tumults are therein,

And what oppressions in the midst thereof.

For they know not to do right, saith the Lord,

Who store up violence and robbery in their palaces.

Therefore, saith the Lord God:

An adversary there shall be even round about the land;

And he shall bring down thy strength from thee,

And thy palaces shall be spoiled.

In the day that I shall visit the transgressions of Israel upon him,

I will also visit the altars of Bethel;

And the horns of the altar shall be cut off, and fall to the ground.

And I will smite the winter house with the summer house;

And the houses of ivory shall perish,

And the great houses shall have an end saith the Lord.

The keen eye of Amos saw every failing of the people. With stern rebuke he awakens their conscience, pointing with unbending rigor to the doom that must follow the violation of moral law. He does not mention the dreaded approach of Assyria, but he seems to have had it in mind.

The priest of Bethel grew alarmed at this plain

speaking and sent word to King Jeroboam II., saying, "Amos hath conspired against thee, the land is not able to bear his words." Ah, how his words must have startled the people! God and duty had not been presented to them that way before. He awakened their conscience. Turning to the prophet, the priest said, "Go to your own land with your prophecies." But the daring teacher was not to be frightened off in that way, and answered:

"I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was a herdsman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit;
And the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said unto me, 'Go, prophesy unto my people Israel.'"

An important distinction must be pointed out between the prophets who have appeared hitherto and the new line beginning with Amos in the eighth century, about 750 B. C. E. We are told of the *deeds* of Samuel, Nathan, and Elisha, but very few of their *words* are preserved. In the "Prophets" you will find no book of Elijah as you will find a book of Amos. Why? Amos lived later, and shows the beginning of that higher stage of culture when teachings were recorded. Amos *wrote down* his prophecies, so that they could not only be heard by the people addressed, but could be read by those at a distance, and could always be preserved to inspire future generations.

In the silent interval between the old and the new school of prophets, no doubt the seeds sown by the

earlier teachers had taken root in the hearts of the thoughtful that gave promise of rich harvest, some fruit of which we already see in the broader and loftier religious ideas of Amos. A period of silence is not necessarily a barren period. There may have been noble prophets and teachers whose names are lost but whose influence endured. There is a mention of Jonah, for instance, whose prophecy is unfortunately lost. In all histories there are many workers, but few names. We are all of us trying to do our duty in our humble way to help the cause of right, with no expectation of having our names inscribed on history's roll of honor.

Why did not Amos preach in Judah?

NOTES FOR TEACHERS AND ADVANCED PUPILS.

Jahveh. In many places where we have used "Eternal" or "God," the Hebrew text has Jahveh, sometimes incorrectly written Jehovah. We must not consider it as a name, but only as a quality. God has no name. See Note, vol. i., page 128.

In chapter xv. it was pointed out that the zeal of the prophet often overstated the shortcomings of the nation. Let us hope this was true of Amos. Reformers in all ages have always overestimated the evil they denounced, for only then do the people give heed to their words.

It must be remembered that we have not all of Amos' writings; the few chapters given are but fragments.

The summary of Amos' teaching is: Less form and more spirit; less sacrifice and more duty; less luxury and more justice.

See Book of the Twelve Prophets, Expositors' Bible—Amos. See Amos—Appendix.

CHAPTER XVII.

HOSEA—GOD IS LOVE.

BIBLE TEXT: "I will say to them who were not my people, Ye are my people, and they shall say, Thou art our God." *Hosea ii. 23.*

This reign of Jeroboam II., so renowned for its literary and moral activity, also produced another great prophet, HOSEA, who preached in later reigns as well. Amos and Hosea are generally spoken of together, for they both voice the loftiest religious tone of the century in which they lived. They did not resort to trances or ecstasies, music or symbols, but, with unaffected directness, delivered their divine message to man.

Hosea, son of Beerī, unlike Amos, came from the Northern Kingdom and from higher social rank. But, like Amos, he uses the same simple language, caring not for ornate style as long as he can strike home. Both he and Amos draw their figures from pastoral life.

Yet there is a difference here. Amos lived on the borders of the desert, so he presents nature dreary and terrible, as though it, too, was preaching God's judgment of wrong. Hosea gives vivid pictures of country life and husbandry—the change of season of the Syrian year; with it a former and latter rain and its products of corn, flax, oil, and fig. He shows us the team of oxen, the reapers breaking up the

fallow ground, and the heifer treading out the corn. While Hosea, like Amos, also lays chief stress upon the worship of God and the pursuit of righteousness, he more closely connects the two, showing that fidelity to God brings purity of life, while worship of idols leads to immorality. The difference between the popular idea of Baal and the prophets' idea of God was a moral difference. Other prophets may have dwelt upon God's power as against the powerlessness of idols, upon God's wisdom, upon His majesty, but Hosea lays stress upon God's *holiness*. The worship of the Eternal God is purifying and elevating; the service of idolatry commanded immodesty drunkenness, and riot. Israel, true to God, is like a chaste, faithful, and devoted wife; Israel wandering after Astarte or Baal is a wanton, abandoned outcast. Yet God in His merciful love is always ready to take His erring wife, as the prophet calls Israel, back to His heart, if she will but forsake her evil ways. Hosea is the first prophet to condemn the worship of the bulls set up by Jeroboam I. at Dan and at Bethel, in unmistakable language. They are no better than the idols of Canaan, although some ignorant priests approved their worship.

What were these idols against which the prophets so passionately and persistently declaimed? An idol first means a thing that can be seen. It was either worshiped for itself or for some power for which it stood. There was Chemosh, god of Moab,

almost identical with Moloch, symbolizing the fierceness of the sun, to appease whom little children were burned alive. Baal symbolized the creative power of the sun; Ashtoreth was the seven-horned virgin of the moon; Ashera, strangely translated "a grove," was a pole or artificial tree, emblematic of a goddess something like Venus, whose worship consisted of lewd and impure acts of all kinds. It was supposed that these gods delighted in immodesty and cruelty. Their altars were generally on the hill-tops, the "high places," as they were familiarly styled. Can you wonder at the bitter reproaches of the prophets when they see the people yielding at times to these Canaanite temptations.

Hosea's picture of the sins of the people is even darker than that of Amos, for he saw the rapid decay of the nation after the death of Jeroboam II., which Amos was spared. He saw usurpers seize the throne by conspiracy and oppression, bringing anarchy and violence as their consequence. He saw, too, the approach of that dread power, Assyria, that was later to overthrow Israel. This gives an added sadness to his words, when he bemoans a people that have no true leader among them, who have lost their spirit and are becoming the prey of other nations. It is as though the doom threatened by Amos had come.

The last desperate attempt to make alliance with their natural foe, "Asshur" (Assyria), or with Egypt

he condemns as futile. We shall see how right he was. The conspiracies of Israel and Judah against each other equally pained him, for he would have liked to see the brothers one nation again. The only hope he saw for the corrupt kingdom was its overthrow and recommencement on a higher plane. Then he pictures a glorious future, when Israel shall turn to God; when "they that dwell in His shadow shall grow as the corn and blossom as the vine."

Hosea varied from Amos in much the same way as Elisha varied from Elijah. The earlier prophet in each instance is stern, the latter is gentle. What compassion and pity these words of Hosea breathe as he rebukes his people "more in sorrow than in anger!" Amos sees only the justice of God; therefore he is very severe all through; Hosea sees his mercy and His love. No later prophet excels Hosea in touching tenderness. He gives us a picture of God's treatment of man, such as we find presented in Psalms—"Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, even as a father the child in whom he delights."

Some selected passages from his book :

Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel;
For the Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the
land.

Because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God
in the land.

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.
Because thou hast rejected knowledge I also will reject thee.

Ye have ploughed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity,
For they sow the wind and they shall reap the whirlwind.
I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their
 offense, and seek my face;
In their affliction they will seek me earnestly.
Come, let us return to the Lord;
He hath smitten, but he will heal us.
I will betroth thee unto me forever
In righteousness, justice, loving-kindness, and mercy.

O Ephraim O Judah, what shall I do to thee?
For your goodness is as the morning cloud and as the dew
 that goeth early away.
Therefore have I chastised thee through the prophets.
I have slain them by the words of my mouth;
For I desire kindness, not sacrifice;
The knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.
Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy;
Break up your fallow ground;
For it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you.
Ye have ploughed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity;
Ye have eaten the fruit of lies,
Because thou didst trust in thy way, in the multitude of thy
 mighty men.

I took Ephraim in my arms,
I drew him with ties of love.
But my people are bent on backsliding from me.
How can I give thee up, O Israël?
My heart is turned within me, my compassion is kindled.
I will not return to destroy Ephraim;
For I am God, and not man the Holy One in the midst of you.
Thou shalt know no God but me—besides me there is no
 savior.
I will ransom thee from the power of the grave,

I will redeem thee from death.

O death, where is thy sting, O grave, where is thy destruction!

O Israel return to thy God, for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.

Say to him, Take away all sin and receive us graciously,
And we will render thee prayer instead of burnt-offerings.

Assyria will not save us, neither will we say any more to the
work of our hands. Ye are our gods.

I will be as the dew unto Israel.

It shall blossom as the lily, and his beauty shall be as the
olive tree.

They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall
revive as the corn, and blossom as the vine.

Like the prophecies of Amos, those of Hosea are also *written*. This, indeed, was the important era in Israel when many of its precious traditions and poems that had been lovingly told from generation to generation, but so far preserved only in the memory, were now transcribed on parchment. Some of the prophets, priests and learned men of the day would collect all floating stories, old songs, fragments of history, accounts of conquests that had accumulated through many centuries, would arrange them, edit them, and perhaps make several copies of each completed book. This is about the time, too, when some of the Books of the Bible were written, the prophets for the most part being the historians, and giving to the records that reverent touch that will always distinguish them as Sacred History.

The order in which the literature of a nation

gradually grows is somewhat like this: First, we have poetry, songs commemorating battles, brief records of traditions, sayings and speeches; then codes of law, connected history, long poems, and, last of all, philosophy. Perhaps at this period, too, special scribes were officially appointed by the king to write down whatever of importance transpired. And you have already been told of history recorded in inscriptions, such as the Moabite Stone and the Black Obelisk.

"The Book of the Wars of the Lord" and the "Book of Jasher" were the oldest historical works. These books, to which the authors so frequently refer for all particulars of Bible narratives, are unfortunately lost. Reference has been made to the lost chronicles of Israel and Judah, in an earlier chapter.

Can God be merciful without being just?

NOTES FOR TEACHERS AND ADVANCED PUPILS.

The Rabbis say that God prays that His mercy may not outweigh His justice

Some Bible scholars think that the incident in the early chapters of Hosea of the unfaithful wife is mentioned simply as a symbol to portray vividly Israel's infidelity to God. Others believe that such was the actual experience of the unfortunate prophet, and the domestic tragedy, while it saddened his life, was earnestly preached by him as a warning and lesson to his people.

See Hosea—Appendix.

Read "The False Gods," Readings and Recitation—Milton.
J. P. S. A.

Hosea's pictures of a loving God are such as bring religious consolation to every troubled soul.

Hosea's grave in the east of the Jordan, on Mount Hosea, is still regarded as a sanctuary.

ISRAEL—AND—JUDAH.

SHALLUM—743.

UZZIAH—786.

MENAHEN—743.

JOTHAM—740.

PEKAIAH—736.

AHAZ—735-715.

PEKAH—735.

HOSIAH—731-722.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE APPROACH OF ASSYRIA.

BIBLE TEXT: "The Eternal shall bring a nation against thee from afar, a nation of fierce countenance, which will not regard the person of the old nor show favor to the young. And they shall besiege thee in all thy gates throughout all thy land."

Deut. xxviii 49, 50.

The prophets were always the first to see the approach of danger to the nation. They are sometimes called the *watchmen*, for they stood on a higher plane, so to speak, and could see beyond the calm and sunshine of the present. Accustomed as moral teachers to ponder on distant and remote consequences, they realized that this power Assyria, now hovering in the distance, having taken Babylonia, Elam, Media

and Armenia, would creep down to Tyre and Syria and would eventually grasp Samaria. The approach of the Assyrians is heralded by Isaiah, a prophet of whom we shall speak presently, in these startling words :

“ They shall come with speed, swiftly; none shall be weary nor stumble. They shall not sleep nor slumber, the girdle of their loins shall not be loosed, nor the latchet of their shoes broken. Their arrows are sharp and their bows bent, their horses' hoofs shall be counted like flint and their wheels like a whirlwind. Their roaring shall be like a lion; yea, they will roar and lay hold of the prey, carry it away safe, and there shall be none to deliver.”

The advance of the Assyrians was the most important event in the eight century B. C. E. They were located between the Tigris and the Euphrates, which was also the centre of the Babylonian Empire, with whom the Assyrians were somewhat commingled, being of the same race and speaking the same language. Their empire, like that of Egypt, was made up of a union of conquests and its extent varied constantly. At the time that it came in contact with Syria, it extended from the Caspian Sea to the Persian Gulf, which would have included all of present Persia.

We have found out more about the Assyrians in recent years, since we have learnt to read their records. We call their writing *cuneiform*, which means wedge-shaped or arrow-shaped, since their letters look like arrows. Their capital was the famous

Nineveh. They had reached a fair degree of civilization, having priests and sages and possessing a through knowledge of art and some knowledge of science. In their methods of war they resembled somewhat the Romans of a later day. They were hardy hordes, and believed more in force than in principle. Their government was a military despotism, their chief idea of war being savage cruelty and exquisite torture. They had little use for men of thought or lofty character, but praised men of brute courage. Hence their history is one of devastation and bloodshed, counterbalanced by no good service rendered to the world. Still this spirit of wanton destruction and reckless massacre of enemies was to a great extent the prevailing spirit of the average civilization of that age and of some ages yet to follow; a spirit that we to-day call barbarism.

While Assyria kept aloof, all went well with Israel, but its glance was now being directed westward towards Syria, Palestine and Egypt. Let us recall again its various steps of progress. In 870 Tyre and Sidon were made vassals; Israel and Assyria must have met in Omri's reign, since they, on their monuments, call Israel the "land of Omri." In 854 Ahab of Israel and Benhadad of Damascus both met reverses at Assyria's hand, and their successors, Jehu and Hazael, also paid tribute. Then there was an interval of peace in which Hazael took opportunity to seize most of Israel's land east of the Jordan. But

the hand of Assyria reached Damascus again about 803; so that Joash and Jeroboam II. were easily able to get back all their lands again from the panic-stricken Syria. But toward the end of his reign Jeroboam II. had felt the touch of Asshur, for Hamath, which had been won from Syria, was taken by the Assyrian usurper, Pul, a fierce and bold conqueror who called himself Tiglath-pileser II. He revived Assyria's declining power. From now on his conquests were rapid. Each conquered land was made into a province with a satrap or governor to collect revenues to maintain the empire. The monarch expected gradually to conquer the world—that is, all of the world that was then known.

The latter part of Jeroboam II.'s reign was not so prosperous as its earlier years. The land suffered from drought, locusts, and pestilence, and was visited by an earthquake which left such an awful impression that for some time after the years were reckoned from it. At Jeroboam's death the nation rapidly declined, for it was the signal for another of those periods of anarchy, intrigue, and bloodshed that were so frequent in the kingdom of the Ten Tribes. Again the throne was seized by a rapid succession of fierce soldiers. Jeroboam's son, ZECHARIAH, had not been on the throne six months before he was publicly murdered by SHALUM, together with the rest of his family. That ended the dynasty of Jehu in the year 743 B. C. E.

The usurper enjoyed the crown for a month only to be slain by another, named MENAHEM, an officer of Zechariah and his avenger. He was a cruel tyrant. Because Tipseh, a place not far from Shechem, would not open its gates to this adventurer, who was chosen means the choice of the people, he had the inhabitants slaughtered with a barbarity that recalls the Syrian cruelties denounced by Amos. Seeing his unpopularity with the people, he entered into a fatal alliance with the dreaded Assyrian ruler, Pul or Tiglath-pileser, in order to secure his throne against the people. This support was bought at a heavy price—a thousand talents of silver, about \$1,875,000. This enormous sum, of course, could only be paid by laying heavy taxes on the people.

He was succeeded by his son, PEKAHIAH, but he had not the vigor of his father to hold the nation in subjection. He reigned hardly two years when his captain, PEKAH, following what had become a sad precedent in Israel, slew the king and his Gileadite guards, and seized the reins of power. This Pekah, though a man of strength, was perhaps the most worthless of all the usurpers whose lust for power hastened the end of the helpless nation. This is how a prophet of the time denounces him:

“Woe to the worthless shepherd that leaveth the flock: who does not seek the lost, nor heal the broken, nor feed the sound, but who eats the flesh of the fat and tears their hoofs to pieces.”

Regardless of consequences, he treacherously entered into an alliance with Rezin, king of Syria, to aid him in an attack upon Judah, which only meant new disasters on all sides—how terrible and far-reaching, the conspirators never for a moment realized.

But how were affairs progressing in Judah at this time? When we last laid down the thread of its story Amaziah had been badly beaten by Jehoash of Israel in a war he had brought upon himself. For this foolish venture he was later slain by his own people. Enemies always take advantage of the troubles of their opponents to make their boldest attacks. That was why each new dynasty in Israel, accompanied by civil war, resulted in the loss of outside territory. Seeing this confusion in Judah, Edom, the strongest of the petty nationalities on the borders, took up arms against Judah with the assistance of Egypt. Judah got the worst of the fight, and many of its boys and girls were sold as slaves to the Ionians (of Greece.) This was the first removal of children of Judah to distant lands. As though to add to their troubles, an earthquake happened at this time.

But a new king was now on the throne and confidence began to return. His name was UZZIAH, (sometimes called Azariah) son of Amaziah—perhaps not the eldest. You have already been told that Judah was so faithful to the house of David, that

even when a king was slain, his son was always placed upon the throne. Uzziah was a man of energy and of fine character, and tried to restore something of the fallen greatness of Judah. He came to the throne while Jeroboam II. was still alive, and these two monarchs reigned particularly long in their respective lands. He was great both in peace and in war. He reopened the navigation of the Red Sea, that Jehoshaphat had attempted, by winning back Elath and rebuilding it as a harbor to take the place of Ezion-geber, which was dangerous, because of its rocks. But no more expeditions to Ophir were attempted; the times were too stormy. He waged successful wars with the old enemy, the Philistines, overthrowing Gath, Jabneh, and Ashdod and rebuilding new cities in their place, reminding us of the conquest of King David. He was successful, too, against some Arabian tribes and brought the Ammonites to tribute again. His fame even reached Egypt. Judah was outrivalling Israel. Some surrounding principalities sought his protection.

He also turned his attention to his capital, Jerusalem, and strengthened it at its weakest points. He built fortified towers furnished with elaborate engines of war, such as the knowledge of the time afforded, placed them at the gates and at the desert frontier, so that the city might be well defended. With a well-equipped army, he felt prepared for all enemies. Perhaps this excellent condition of defense

may have persuaded Tiglath-pileser that it would not be wise to attack Judah at this time. Then he turned his attention to works of peace. He hewed out cisterns to supply water for his cattle, for he loved husbandry better than war, and encouraged Judah was raised to a position of honor and power, vine-culture and agriculture in the Shephelah. So just when Israel, having passed the zenith of its prosperity under Jeroboam II., was at the mercy of selfish and reckless adventurers, and was hastening to its fall. But for the moment both Israel and Judah were growing more cultured and were introducing more of the arts of civilization.

The historians differ as to the length of Uzziah's reign, as in consequence of his illness, his son JOTHAM, had to take his place in the last year of his life. Jotham continued his father's vigorous rule, building gates, castles, and towers, and bringing the Ammonites under still more thorough subjection. Like many of the kings of the house of Judah, he remained faithful to the worship of God, though permitting the "high places," the centres of many idolatrous superstitions. Jotham was too strong for the conspirators, Pekah of Israel and Rezin of Syria, to carry out their plan of overthrowing Judah. But Jotham was succeeded by AHAZ, who, being weak, gave them hope of succeeding in their conspiracy.

Having now brought the histories of Israel and Judah to the same level, we can pause to introduce

a new character, Isaiah, the prophet, who played an important part in the affairs of both.

Is the more civilized nation always the more moral?

NOTES FOR TEACHERS AND ADVANCED PUPILS.

Conquest was not the only cause that led races to wander to new lands. The emigration of man from the East towards the West was almost an instinct. In this way does he find soil and climate and food most fitted for his needs. By this means too does the world gradually become equably inhabited.

The earthquake that occurred in the reign of Jeroboam II. of Israel and Uzziah of Judah and which gave a convenient date of reckoning, is mentioned by many of the prophets. See Geikie, vol. iv., page 231, and Josephus' description of the earthquake in the. "Antiquities," xv, v. 2.

Pekah and Rezin may at first have asked Judah to join them against Assyria, and decided to attack Judah only on its refusal.

The authorities are not quite agreed as to the length of Menahem's reign. Many of the dates here are conjectural, and you will probably come across other lists that vary from these. When we find a date inscribed on an Assyrian monument from the contemporary history, we can fix a corresponding date in our annals—but we are likely to be out a year or two.

Macomb's "Holy Land in History and Geography," in the second volume, gives a wonderfully clear presentation of Israel's change of fortune in a series of colored maps. No Sunday school teacher should be without this book.



WRITING MATERIALS.

CHAPTER XIX.

ISAIAH—THE REMNANT SAVES.

BIBLE TEXT: "Woe unto them that call evil good and good evil, that put darkness for light and light for darkness, that put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes and prudent in their own sight."

Isaiah v., 20, 21.

We have seen that in every critical period of this history a great prophet has appeared, who has largely influenced the affairs of state, as well as the social and moral condition of the people. Who was the great prophet during this period of storm and stress, when Israel and Judah were shaken to their foundations by the vast empires around them? It was the prophet ISAIAH, greatest of all those religiously inspired teachers. He is one of the most striking figures in the Bible, and did more, perhaps, than any other prophet to guide the destinies of his people. We shall see him for fifty years at the helm of the state, during the most critical period, not only of the history of his own people, but of the then known world.

For colossal empires were rapidly forming and as rapidly going to pieces in their struggle with each other for the supremacy of the East, and the land of our ancestors was often the battle-ground. This helped to give him a larger view of God and His

purposes than had been conceived by the earlier prophets.

It was no easy task to pilot one's nation through such stormy times. But though an idealist, Isaiah was also a practical man, a far-sighted statesman as well as an inspired prophet. He was the guide of kings and the religious exhorter of the masses, the power behind thrones and the bold defender of the poor. He does not appear at rare intervals, uttering his rebukes and warnings, and then disappearing, like Elijah; nor was he a man sprung from the humble classes, like Amos. He was of high rank, and he was continually at the front from the time that he began to prophesy, in the reign of Jotham.

He was also the most cultivated man of all Israel's prophets. His addresses are written in masterly style full of rich, poetic figures. They are Hebrew classics. It is not often that a religious prophet is at the same time so renowned a literary genius, though they nearly all wrote well. Isaiah was both, and his prophecies are read for their literary charm as well as for their spiritual power.

Isaiah gives us a beautiful picture of how the call of God came to him. He seemed to see the Almighty sitting on a throne, with angels flying around him. And one cried to another: "Holy, holy, holy is the Eternal of Hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory." Next he hears the voice of God: "Whom shall I send: who will go for us?" Then Isaiah

rose up and said: "Here am I; send me!" It was only a night vision, but it helped to decide him to make the cause of his people the mission of his life. Like Amos and Hosea, he turned to the lowly and suffering, and made their needs his chief concern. The conquests of Uzziah may have brought prestige to the nation and perhaps booty to the nobility, but to the masses even the most successful war is a calamity. The wealthy held all the profits of trade, and some grew luxurious and corrupt. Furthermore, King Ahaz was weak and belonged to the heathen party. So Isaiah saw much the same kind of corruption in Judah that the prophets of the last century had found in the Kingdom of the Ten Tribes after the successful wars of Jeroboam II.

In his stirring addresses he declared that the judges took bribes; the poor were driven from the tribunal; the righteous were distressed.

- . "The spoil of the needy is in your houses; what mean you that you crush my people and grind the faces of the poor? O, my people, those who lead thee have caused thee to err. Say ye to the righteous that it shall be well with them, for they shall eat the fruit of their doings
Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with them, for the reward of their hands shall be given them."

He denounced, too, the women of Jerusalem, luxurious and vain, caring only for finery. And so he spurns their anklets, their bracelets, their mufflers, their perfume boxes, their amulets, their

nose rings, their shawls, their turbans, and their veils.

“And it shall come to pass, instead of sweet spices there shall be rottenness; instead of a girdle, a rope; instead of beauty, burning.”

He feared that nearly all the teachings of the past were lost upon Judah. They were as idolatrous as ever. They had eyes, but could not understand; they were gross and stupid, “shutting their eyes and ears so that they could not understand and be healed.” “For thou hast forgotten the God of thy salvation and hast not been mindful of the Rock of thy strength.” They would continue in their evil way until desolation and ruin stared them in the face and most of them had been exiled far away. Then the righteous few who had remained true to God in all adversity, the “holy seed,” the “remnant,” would at last be spared to preserve the religion of the God of righteousness:

“For though I-rael be as the sand of the sea, only a *remnant* shall return overflowing with righteousness, a remnant shall return unto the mighty God. They will no more^t support themselves on those who smite them—but will lean for support on the Eternal, the Holy One of Israel, in truth.”

He dared then to say that it were better that the nation should fall, if thereby right would prevail in the surviving few.

The disciples of Isaiah became later the righteous

few, their numbers steadily growing. Though Isaiah felt that Jerusalem, God's Holy City, would always stand, a later prophet, Micah, said even that would fall. Like Amos and Hosea, Isaiah despises sacrifices and formal worship, and pleads for the spirit of religion and preaches the reformation of society. His words, however, are very bold, and we can imagine that many of the priests of the Temple may have feared he went too far :

"To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? I am sated with burnt-offering.

I delight not in the blood of bullocks, lambs, or he goats.

Bring no more vain oblations ; incense is an abomination unto me.

When you offer many prayers I will not hear—

For your hands are full of blood.

Wash you, make you clean ; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes.

Cease to do evil, learn to do well.

Seek judgment, relieve the oppressed.

Judge the fatherless plead for the widow.

Then though your sins be as scarlet they shall be white as snow,

Though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool."

While all other nations placed the golden age in the past at the dawn of history, the Hebrew prophets alone realized that humanity's golden age must lie in the future. Man did not start perfect, sinking lower as time went on ; but beginning in ignorance and savagery, he has grown better as he grew wiser.

and hopes at last to reach perfection as the goal of all his struggles. The belief in the ultimate coming of a glorious time, when right alone will triumph and sin will be no more, has spurred man on to noble achievement and filled his heart with glad hope in the midst of suffering and despair.

This picture of the future is found in both Isaiah and Micah :

“And it shall come to pass in the latter days that the Lord’s house shall be established at the top of the mountains and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it. Many people will cry : ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us His ways and we will walk in His paths.’ They shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks ; nation shall not lift up the sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.”

Here is another prophecy of the glorious time to come :

The wolf shall also dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid ;
And the calf and the young lion and the fatling together,
And a little child shall lead them.
And the cow and the bear shall feed ; their young ones shall lie down together ;
And the lion shall eat straw like the ox.
They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain ;
For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

This book of Isaiah is quite a large work, and we

shall speak later on of an important series of prophecies it contains in its last twenty-six chapters, which were preached in Babylonia. There is one famous quotation in Isaiah xix., teaching a beautiful brotherhood of man, whose spirit should breathe over all nations and throughout all times. It says that Israel and its *enemies*, Assyria and Egypt, are equally God's people, and asks His blessing on them all:

In that day shall there be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar at the border thereof to the Lord. And it shall be for a sign and a witness unto the Lord of hosts in the land of Egypt: for they shall cry unto the Lord because of the oppressors, and he shall send them a saviour and a defender, and he shall deliver them. And the Lord shall be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know the Lord in that day; yea, they shall vow a vow unto the Lord, and perform it. And the Lord shall smite Egypt: he shall smite and heal it: and they shall return even to the Lord, and he shall be entreated of them, and shall heal them. In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians. In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land. *Whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance.*

Were the good old times better than our own days?

NOTES FOR TEACHERS AND ADVANCED PUPILS.

The righteous few, the remnant, the noble minority, has always saved Israel in its hour of trial; the prophet party were a few, the

Maccabeans were a few. Be not dismayed if you be not with the majority, for one and God form a majority. We read in Pirke-Aboth (Early Fathers): "In the place where there is no man, show thou thyself a man." See Matthew Arnold—"Numbers," in "Discourses on America."

We will briefly explain here some hard words that occur not only in this chapter, but in some of the earlier chapters too:

Exhortation—An address bidding us lead good lives.

Classic—Belonging to the best writers.

Ideal—An idea of a thing in its most perfect form.

Luxurious—Caring for comforts and delicacies.

Tribunal—Place of judgment.

Supremacy—The highest place.

Amulet—Ornament for the arm; a charm.

Ultimate—Last.

The prophets always explained great events religiously and as part of the divine purpose. They were the moral interpreters of history. For example, the approach of Assyria, instead of filling Isaiah with dismay, was applied by him for the religious education of Judah. Thus it became under his guidance a great event in their development. Notice the different steps:

First—The dimensions of this great power, Assyria, gave them a broader idea of the world, for the world of the ancients was small indeed. They began to conceive what the world was, and what was their relation towards it.

Secondly—If God (Yahveh) was the Creator of this world so vast, how much greater His work now becomes, how much mightier is He than they had once supposed!

Thirdly—If God is controlling this great power, Assyria, to the ends of justice in spite of itself, then is Judah made to understand the meaning of *Providence* and the government of the world by moral law.

CHAPTER XX.

THE DOWNFALL OF ISRAEL.

BIBLE TEXT: "He shall besiege thee in all thy gates, until thy high and fenced walls come down, wherein thou trustest, throughout all thy land."

Deut. xxviii. 52.

We have stated that Pekah, king of Israel, forgetting that Syria was the natural enemy of Israel and Judah its natural friend, had entered into an alliance with Rezin, king of Syria, to overthrow the kingdom of his brethren in the South.

Unfortunately, the throne of Judah was in very weak hands at this critical time. Ahaz lacked the vigor and strength of character of Uzziah and Jotham. The conspirators therefore determined to make a bold attack on Jerusalem—"and the heart of Judah shook." It is true that his grandfather had so strongly fortified the capital that it withstood the severe onslaughts of the conspirators. But the outlying tributaries, upon whom his hold was not so firm, began falling away one by one. The Philistines recovered their lost ground. Ammon and Moab had to be abandoned. The Syrians, the chief actors in the fight, next took away from Ahaz the important port of Elath, which Uzziah had restored to Judah and built up. It was given back to the Edomites, who kept it from that time on; so this valuable approach to the Red Sea was henceforth closed to Judah.

Isaiah came to the king and tried to encourage him. His prophetic insight told him that Israel and Syria would soon fall. Rezin and Pekah were nothing but "smoking stumps of torches," their fire almost extinguished; no need to fear them. They will be overcome by a greater power behind them. Before a child just born can reach the age of speech, they will be in the clutches of Assyria, and their lands desolate. Put your trust in God, amend your ways, and all will come well; but if you lose faith in God, your kingdom will disappear.

But the faint-hearted Ahaz would not listen, nor did he share the sublime faith of the inspired Isaiah. In the madness of despair, this idolatrous monarch, childishly yielding to a savage superstition, sacrificed his eldest son, as Mesha of Moab had done in a similar emergency. What must have been the prophet's horror when he learned that this idolatrous outrage had been committed! But the weak monarch went further yet in his mad course, and in spite of Isaiah's severe denunciation, he actually entered into an alliance with Assyria itself! Fearing the opposition of the prophet, the project was concealed from him until it was accomplished. When Isaiah heard of it, he rightly called it "the covenant of death."

However, it was done. An embassy from Ahaz, bearing rich presents, for which he had stripped the Temple of its silver and gold, came to Tiglath-Pile-

ser, king of Assyria, asking his help against Pekah and Rezin, just as Menahem of Israel had done. This suited the Assyrian exactly, as the conquest of Syria and Israel was part of his plan. He simply came down upon them now instead of later on.

When Pekah and Rezin saw his approach, their hope was changed to alarm. How could their petty kingdoms stand before that colossal power? The attack on Judah was abandoned, of course; that may have been all that Ahaz wished. But he could not stop the mighty force he had set in motion. Syria fell; Damascus, its capital, was taken: Rezin, its king, was slain. Thus fell Israel's old enemy at a moment when it was not an enemy. It was the wall between Israel and Assyria, and its overthrow brought Israel face to face with the dreaded foe. Israel fared little better than its ally. Half of the kingdom, including the whole provinces of Galilee and Gilead, was taken. A large indemnity had to be paid, too. Galilee was the land west of the Sea of Chinnereth, that was afterwards called the Sea of Galilee. Pekah remained king of the fragment of kingdom that was left.

Tiglath-Pileser selected the flower of the inhabitants of these conquered cities and transplanted them to some distant part of the Assyrian empire—nobles, officers, priests, sages—leaving only the poorest behind, who would be least likely to start a rebellion, deprived of all their leaders. This was about

the year 734. This policy was usually adopted after a conquest. The inhabitants of Damascus had also been transplanted in the same way to Kir, in Armenia, or in South Babylonia.

Infatuated with his new ally, Assyria, Ahaz went so far as not only to introduce the Assyrian language, but even Assyrian star worship. Just as Omri had tried to introduce Phœnician gods in Israel, so Ahaz now tried to make Judah the centre of the religion of *his* political ally, Assyria. The sacrifice of his eldest son may have been copied from the Assyrian custom of human sacrifice. Many of the priests became corrupted through the royal example. Ahaz did his best to undo the spiritual work of Isaiah, for he threw himself entirely into the hands of the heathen party, to whom he gave the reins of power. So Isaiah's reforms were postponed till the following reign, when his greatest work was accomplished. While in Damascus, watching its overthrow, Ahaz found nothing better to bring back to Judah than a copy of a heathen altar. But, happily for him, he did not live to see the end—now very near—of the Northern Kingdom at the hands of the enemy he had raised up against them.

Pekah of Israel had not given up the fight; but whatever projects he might have had in mind, were speedily cut short by his own death at the hands of an outraged patriot. The name of his slayer was HOSHEA, who now took the throne and tried his

best to reform the shattered nation. Shalmaneser was the next King of Assyria, and Hoshea was allowed to reign on in a weak sort of way by becoming his vassal, paying him heavy tribute year by year. He continued this for a little while, but being a man who had the making of something better in him, he conceived the daring project of striking a blow for his nation's freedom. He obtained momentary aid from Tyre, which had successfully resisted Assyria for five years. In fact, Hoshea was not the only one trying to overthrow this great power. All the vanquished nations adjacent to Israel were rebelling against their mighty conqueror, taking advantage of the revolt that called him to Babylonia. Hoshea also appealed to So (Sabak), king of Egypt, for support, which was promised. This Egyptian king may even have incited Israel to revolt. Egypt had been alarmed at the growth of Assyria's power, from which it was only separated by the mountains of Canaan. But when the issue came, So did not think it worth his while to come to the aid of so helpless an ally, and left him to his fate.

Suppressing the uprising in Babylonia, Shalmaneser now turned to Samaria. It maintained a brave and fierce resistance, and for three years Shalmaneser had to keep up the siege. The awful scenes of famine that had occurred when Benhadad besieged it in the days of Jehoahaz, were repeated. But in

spite of their remarkable heroism, there was no doubt of the issue on this occasion, and by the time that Shalmaneser had been succeeded by Sargon, the end came. Omri's beautiful capital, Samaria, fell in the year 720 B. C. E., with terrible slaughter. Twenty-seven thousand of its remaining inhabitants, the best that were left, were carried away to Media, as many of their brethren had been some ten years before. Hoshea, the last and one of the best of twenty kings, was imprisoned in a distant fortress, and with his dethronement Israel ceased to be a nation.

Thus fell the Northern Kingdom of Israel, that had seceded from Judah, after maintaining its separate existence for two hundred and fifty years. Its history is full of stirring events, and is marked by activity and enterprise. It produced some brave kings who led their subjects to conquest, and some noble prophets who pointed the way to something grander than conquest, and who would not permit Israel to forget its ideals or its destiny. It has left behind it precious writings that are preserved in the Bible to-day. Beneath the strife, conspiracy, and bloodshed with which its pages abound, we catch here and there the gleams of fine moral enthusiasm that distinguished it from the nations around it, giving promise that it would survive its conquerors.

While many Israelites were lost in the heart of the Assyrian provinces, while the poor and simple

were left where they were, and some fled to Egypt and Asia Minor, still the men of character, those who really influence a nation, wandered down to Judah to continue in its national life. So those whose identity was worth preserving for the future mission of our race, "the remnant," as Isaiah would have called them, were probably not lost at all. Still, it is the popular belief that all of the Ten Tribes were lost from that time on, and many vain searches and strange conjectures have been made regarding them. So, while we must now turn to Judah only, for the development of those grand religious ideas that had been foreshadowed by Moses and idealized and fostered by the prophets, let us hope that many of Israel's sons also took part in the glorious mission.

In the deserted and desolate Samaria, Sargon transplanted some people from Cuthea and other places, who in course of time came to be called after the city—Samaritans. Picking up some of the religious ideas of the humble Israelites that were left, with whom they mingled, they combined these ideas with their own idolatries. Since the pure faith of Judaism had only half developed in Israel, we can understand what a queer creed this mixture made. But these Samaritans clung to their religion, such as it was, and gave Judah much trouble in after-days.

Is God always with the conqueror?

NOTES FOR TEACHERS AND ADVANCED PUPILS.

The pious editor of this narrative makes the sins and the idolatry of Israel the reason for their overthrow. See 2 Kings, chap. xvii. 7-23. While it was the custom of the ancient Hebrew writers to give to all events moral explanations, still we will not be just to Israel if we make its sins the sole reasons for its downfall. Some of its idolatries were acts of ignorance rather than acts of wilful perversity. There were causes other than moral that led to the downfall of Israel and its neighbors.

Assyria, and later Babylonia, exiled to its own dominions the most vigorous of the inhabitants of the conquered land. This made rebellion least likely; it also tended to crush out national life and national individuality in the people.

According to a popular belief of the time, each land was supposed to have an indwelling divinity. So the foreigners now brought into Samaria feared disaster if they did not recognize among others the God of Israel. Hence they sent for some Israelitish priests to teach them; but they introduced their own gods as well. So we find many strange divinities worshiped by these emigrants. What childish notions of God most of the people of the world yet had, how much they had yet to learn!



BREAKING DOWN THE WALL OF JERUSALEM.

See page 197.



JOSIAH HEARING THE BOOK OF THE LAW. See page 164.

BOOK III.

THE SURVIVAL OF JUDAH.

CHAPTER XXI.

HEZEKIAH'S REFORMATION.

BIBLE TEXT: "I will bear the indignation of the Lord because I have sinned against him. He will bring me forth to the light and I shall behold his righteousness." *Micah vii. 9.*

HEZEKIAH, the son of Ahaz, had been on the throne three years when Israel fell. He was a very different man from his father, in whose reign religion had taken a step backward. Instead of despising the counsel of Isaiah, he put himself entirely under his guidance, so that it is in this reign that this prophet's great work was done.

The overthrow of Israel moved Judah powerfully and profoundly. Now that the fate of the Ten Tribes had come, Judah forgot that at times they had been his rivals, and remembered only that they were his brothers. Might not the same fate overtake us? anxiously asked the men of Judah: but surely God, in whom all power lay, would protect

the one people that acknowledged Him; but how could they be assured of their salvation?

The prophet was at hand with a reply. Samaria had fallen because of its sins. It was immoral and corrupt. Assyria was only the instrument that God used to punish it:

“Ho, Assyria, the rod of mine anger, the staff in whose hand is mine indignation! . . . Wherefore it shall come to pass that when the Lord shall have performed his whole work upon Jerusalem, that I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria and the glory of his high looks. For he hath said, by the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom; I have removed the bounds of the people, I have robbed their treasures, as a valiant man I have brought down kings.

“Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith as if a rod should shake them that lift it up?”

So it was through the influence of Isaiah that this catastrophe in the North, instead of causing Judah to lose all faith in God and plunging them in despair, was made the opportunity for deepening their religious feeling. Under his guidance, they looked up with a new awe to the majesty of God that could mould even so vast a power as Assyria to His purpose, and who hesitated not to chasten the only people that acknowledged Him, in order to bring them nearer to Himself.

Thus Isaiah made Israel's misfortune the opportunity for Judah's religious reformation. The once mighty kingdom of Solomon had dwindled to a

petty state; they must begin to understand that territorial conquest was not for them, that they were destined for a nobler triumph. They must leave the vast empires to fight with each other for the supremacy of the world, while they devote themselves to spreading the knowledge of God and the love of right. But this mission was not realized till a much later day, and only after more terrible calamities befel them, only after Judah had suffered the same awful fate as Israel.

In the meantime, under the teachings of Isaiah, the good work went slowly on. It had taken the children of Israel many hundred years to reach a complete idea of one spiritual God of the universe—monotheism (mono, one; theos, god). Even at this late day the masses did not clearly distinguish between idolatry and divinity. But there was always gathered around the prophet a religious party, who deeply believed in the unseen spiritual God: They were sometimes few and sometimes many. But at this time, for various causes, they made their presence felt as it had not been felt before.

We have so far only spoken of Isaiah; but there was a younger prophet in this reign—a pupil, perhaps, of the elder—who also exercised a great influence in bringing about the reforms of which we are about to speak. His name was Micah, and his birth-place was Moresheth, near Gath. While Isaiah, born in high station, was listened to with respect

even by princes and kings, Micah, like Amos, was of humble parentage. But then he could enter with deeper sympathy into the woes of the masses from his more intimate knowledge of their life. So he moved their hearts by his simple, earnest plea, perhaps even more touchingly than the great Isaiah.

Although he had no voice in the affairs of the state, he denounced the morals of judges, princes, priests, and the people in general, with great boldness and freedom.

He, too, drew moral lessons from the fall of Samaria :

“ For the transgression of Jacob is all this.

And for the sins of the house of Israel.”

But he does not spare his own Judah either, not even Jerusalem ; more severe than Isaiah, he foresees for it the same doom that overtook Israel :

“ It has come even unto Judah.

It hath reached to the very gate of my people, to Jerusalem.

Because the leaders judge for reward and the priests teach for hire and the prophets foretell for money, while, shouting, ‘ God is with us, no evil can come upon us,’ therefore Zion shall be ploughed as a field and Jerusalem shall become ruined heaps, and the mountain of the House as the heights of the forest.”

The influence then of Isaiah and Micah, the growth of the prophet party, the effect of Israel’s fall, and the religious enthusiasm of Hezekiah himself, all combined to bring about a great religious reformation.

The king, filled with the prophet's righteous zeal, led the reform. He was impatiently anxious to remove all the evils at once. Down with the idols, break the images, overthrow the *Massebahs*—*i. e.*, ancient pillars for impure rites—cut down the *Asheras*. The brazen figure of a serpent god, supposed to have existed since the days of Moses, perhaps an idol imitated from the Egyptian serpent worship, was broken to pieces, too. The *Bamahs*—*i. e.*, “high places”—were done away with, or at least purified from superstitious excesses. This name was given them because these places for idol worship were hills or raised spots, on each of which was erected a stone pillar covered with rich carpets, robes, and shawls; a cone-shaped wooden altar stood in front, and around it was usually a grove of trees. But so accustomed had the ignorant people become to these “high places” that they looked upon their overthrow with dismay, thinking it meant the overthrow of religion itself. So it was not till some time later that they were completely given up.

All this destruction does not sound so religious, after all. But if we wish to reach the true, we must first destroy the false. We can build strong foundations only after we have cleared away ruins. Still, it must be confessed that these reforms of Hezekiah were more negative than positive, consisting chiefly in changes in the symbols of worship and ritual. Idols were destroyed, it is true, but pure faith in

God had still not yet taken deep enough root in the hearts of the masses. Nor were all forms of idolatry destroyed either. So we must not be surprised at occasional lapses into superstition and sin. The religious education of our ancestors was not yet finished; any change to be complete could not come all at once. Remember the story of Elijah and the still, small voice.

What is the best way to influence others for good?

NOTES FOR TEACHERS AND ADVANCED PUPILS.

How often our attachment to that which is false leads us to believe that it is an essential part of the truth—*e. g.*, the "high places!"

The morals preached by the prophets, dwelling chiefly on the duties that were owed to the poor and weak, became through Israel the morality of the world. The poor came to be regarded as the good, because the rich were so often oppressors, rich by unfairness. So many half felt that God was on the side of the poor—they needed Him most.

CHAPTER XXII.

SENNACHERIB'S INVASION.

BIBLE TEXT: "Our fathers trusted in Thee; they trusted and thou didst deliver them." *Psalms xxii. 4.*

Now that Israel had fallen, Judah emerged into prominence. Samaria was gone, Jerusalem became the capital and a holy city more than ever before.

Something of the dignity and importance of the royal house of the golden days of King David came back again only that now the prophets are the highest party in the land. Judah had been safer from foreign foes than its brethren in the North, being in a less exposed position. Judah's first step was to stop paying tribute. This was equal to refusing to be a vassal any longer; it was rebellion. What was there to fear? Had not Hezekiah's army been successful against the Philistines, carrying conquests as far as Gaza?

Again, when Merodoch Baladin, who had seized the throne of Babylonia, sent ambassadors to Hezekiah to enter into an alliance against Assyria, Hezekiah accepted the message and showed them his treasures. In the general enthusiasm, he also rashly sought the aid of Egypt. Shebna, an upstart, who was head of the king's household and made a great show, also favored this alliance. This angered Isaiah very much. Such was not the spirit of true faith. If they believed in God, they needed no alliances. He did not wish his people to become entangled in the political schemes of foreign nations. The fostering of such ambitions now would but take them from their true work, which was to fit themselves to become servants of God. Treaties with foreign powers would only bring about their own destruction in the end. But apart from this religious point of view, the prophets had perhaps another

reason for not wishing Judah to ally itself with Egypt in particular. It was a perfidious power that could not be trusted. See how it had left Israel in the lurch at the last hour! It was a nation "of large promise but small performance." Egypt was the typical foe of Israel from the very beginning of its national career in the days of Moses. Isaiah appeared in the streets, disrobed and barefoot, like a captive, to indicate by this striking symbol that such would be the condition to which Assyria would bring both Egypt and her allies. Isaiah's strong opposition stopped the alliance before it had gone far enough to compromise his nation or in any way to restrict its freedom of action.

But the revolt against Assyria continued. Sennacherib, its king at this time, is the best known of all the Assyrian conquerors. He was called "the Great Destroyer." We read of him not only in the Bible but also in the Greek annals. Then again, in digging monuments at Nineveh, valuable cuneiform inscriptions have been found in which this monarch tells of his conquests. While they are full of exaggeration and boasting, they add much valuable information to the Bible record.

Finding all the nations vanquished by his father revolting, he turned his forces, and resolved to subdue them with a firm hand. How they fell one by one at the conqueror's approach—Philistia, Phœcia, the Arab tribes! At last he reached Judah.

Hezekiah found himself alone, at his mercy. Still he bravely resisted. All the outlying fortifications were taken, forty-six "fenced cities," many villages, and war supplies. Many of the people were seized, with all they had, and sold into slavery. Only the capital, Jerusalem, was left, in which the king was shut up like a "bird in his cage." He tried to induce Sennacherib to withdraw by promising to become his vassal again, and to pay him as large a tribute as he demanded. Sennacherib asked for three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. Hezekiah stripped his palace of his treasures, even removing the gold from the Temple doors, for Ahaz had already emptied the treasury to bribe Tiglath-Pileser, but a few years before. Sennacherib seemed to withdraw for a moment, but it was only to take some place near by—Lachish. As he approached nearer to Jerusalem, he saw its importance as a fortress, and repudiated his treaty without scruple. He wanted Judah, not so much for itself, as because it was the intervening territory that separated Assyria from Egypt. That is why Egypt was so willing to receive Judah as a defence, behind which it could take shelter while Judah received the blows! Egypt and Assyria were now the mightiest powers known, and so the world's destiny hung on the issue of the conflict. Many of the nations around the Mediterranean were prepared for a great struggle. It was one of the turning points in history.

Sennacherib was besieging Lachish, in the neighborhood of Jerusalem. He sent the three chief officers of his government—Tartan, captain of his body-guard, his overseer, and his cup-bearer (which meant more than its title implies)—with an imposing army, demanding the surrender of Jerusalem. Hezekiah sent his officers to confer with them. The Assyrian ambassador, who was a very shrewd diplomat, asked :

“Upon whom dost thou trust that thou hast rebelled against me? On Egypt? It is only a bruised reed. I wager my master would give you two thousand horses, if you could but find riders for them. How can you then withstand us? Do you trust in the Lord God, most of whose altars, by the way, your Hezekiah has destroyed? It was your Lord that said to me, Go up against this land and destroy it.”

Now the people were all standing on the walls of the city, looking with ignorant curiosity at the bright red coats of the Assyrians. Hezekiah's officers, fearing that they would be discouraged at these words, said: “Do not speak Hebrew with us, or the people will understand.” The Assyrian craftily answered: “Is it not this very people who are perishing with hunger whom I have been sent to address?” Turning to the people, he shouted on purpose to be heard:

“Thus says Sennacherib:

“Do not let Hezekiah deceive you; he cannot deliver you out of my hand. Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in the Lord, saying, the Lord shall deliver us. What has become

of the gods of Syria and all of the peoples I have conquered—aye, what has become of Samaria? Yield to me and I will take you to a fruitful land, and ye shall eat every one of his vine and every one of his fig-tree, a land of corn, and wine, and bread, and vineyards.' ”

At Hezekiah's request, the people answered not a word; and the ambassadors came into Hezekiah's presence with their clothes rent, feeling that their cause was desperate indeed.

Some of the nobles, indifferent to the fate of the cities, were drinking and making merry, thinking that the end had come. The king turned in disgust from these revelers. What should he do? Ah! he might send to Isaiah and ask his counsel. He could not have done better. He sent the same embassy with this message to the prophet:

“This is a day of trouble, of rebuke, of contumely; there is not food to give to the young children. O pray to God for the remnant that is left!”

Isaiah, the undaunted, sent back this encouraging answer:

“Be not afraid of the blaspheming words you have heard. Assyria will not as much as shoot an arrow against the city.”

Given new heart by this reply, the ambassadors of Sennacherib were informed that Jerusalem would not surrender.

Isaiah followed up his inspiring message to the king by going among the people and cheering them too, as Elisha had done in Israel when the enemy

was without the walls. Sennacherib, who was taking Libnah, east of Lachish, now received news that an Egyptian army, under an Ethiopian ruler, was approaching against him. At such a moment the possession of Jerusalem became doubly important as a fine fortress from which to attack the enemy. Again he sent a message by letter to Hezekiah, trying to frighten him by an account of his conquests. But there was no thought of yielding now, after Isaiah's assurance. Hezekiah went to the Temple and offered a prayer:

"O Lord, thou alone art the true God of all the earth, for thou hast made both heaven and earth. Verily the kings of Assyria have wasted the surrounding nations and burned their gods in fire; but they were not gods, only the work of men's hands—wood and stone. But O, save us out of their hand, that all nations may know that thou alone art the one living God."

Following the example of Isaiah, the brave and energetic king inspired his people with a cheering speech, in which he bade them be strong and of a good courage, and not to fear Assyria—

"For there is a greater with us than with him; with him an arm of flesh, with us the Eternal God."

Nor did he despise his material forces at hand, but organized his army to prepare for the attack.

Strange to say, Sennacherib, with all his vaunting, never attacked Jerusalem. He raised the siege; for a pestilence broke out in his army, destroying many,

and he was powerless to attack either Judah or Egypt. Again, an unexpected attack came from Ethiopia at this same unfortunate moment, so he was compelled to retire to his own dominions.

In spite of his boasting in his inscriptions,—his usual custom, never to acknowledge defeat—things could not have gone well. Sennacherib's forced departure from the capital of Judah reminds us of the sudden withdrawal of Benhadad from the siege of the capital of Israel. The coincidence is more remarkable when we remember that on the former occasion it was these very Assyrians who unconsciously came to the relief of Samaria. One tradition says that a flock of field-mice gnawed away the bows and quivers of the Assyrian army, so that their arms were useless. Certainly the circumstance, whatever it may have been, came to be regarded as a special act of Providence, and Isaiah was more trusted than ever. The incident tended to deepen Judah's faith in God. Immense booty came to Israel from the deserted camp. Sennacherib's humiliation has been made the subject of one of Byron's poems. Here are some of its verses :

The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold,
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold;
Like the leaves of the forest when summer is green,
That host with their banners at sunset were seen.

Like the leaves of the forest when autumn hath blown,
That host on the morrow lay wither'd and strewn;

For the Angel of Death spread his wings on the blast,
And breathed in the face of the foe as he pass'd.

And the tents were all silent, the banners alone,
The lances unlifted, the trumpet unblown,
And the might of the Gentile, unsmeared by the sword,
Hath melted like snow in the glance of the Lord!

Is not God's providence as truly manifested in the ordinary events of daily life as in marvelous occurrences?

NOTES FOR TEACHERS AND ADVANCED PUPILS.

Lachish, intrenched among the hills of Hebron, was a hard place to capture. It had been one of Rehoboam's fortresses, and had resisted the attack of Shishak of Egypt. Its modern name is Tel-El-Hesy.

Rab-shekeh, mentioned among the Assyrian officers, was not a proper name, but the title for chief of the staff, while Tartan was the commander-in-chief.

The simoon, that terrible wind which some think may have destroyed Sennacherib's army, also overthrew the army of Cambyses. It killed ten thousand in Cairo in the year 1696 and three hundred thousand in Constantinople in 1714. There are many similar destructive winds that sweep across the desert. Judas Macabbeus, in one of his speeches to his soldiers, mentioned this overthrow of Sennacherib's army.

Herodotus mentions the story of Sennacherib's army being destroyed by field-mice; he learned it from Egypt.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE RELIGIOUS RELAPSE.

BIBLE TEXT: "But I, by the Spirit of God, am filled with power and judgment and might to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin."

Micah iii. 8.

Although victory was with Judah, still the long siege and the fierce attack that had preceded it, left the country in a ruined and desolate condition. War brings all evils in its train. Perhaps the very pestilence which some think thinned the army of Sennacherib and compelled him to give up the siege, may have been brought on by the unburied dead that formed almost a continuous trail behind the retreating foe.

The illness of the king also caused the people much alarm. Even Isaiah feared he would not recover.

"Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die."

Then the King turned his face to the wall and prayed to the Lord, saying:

"I beseech thee, O Lord, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart and have done that which is good in thy sight."

But Hezekiah was not to die then; he lived fifteen years longer. Here is a prayer of thankfulness on his recovery from his sickness:

"I said in the noonday of my days, I shall go unto the gate of the grave."

I said, I shall not see the Lord, even the Lord, in the land of the living.

Mine age is removed and is carried away from me as a shepherd's tent;

I have rolled up like a weaver my life; he will cut me off from the loom.

O Lord, I am oppressed, be thou my shelter.

O Lord, by these things men live, and wholly therein is the life of my spirit;

Wherefore recover thou me and make me to live.

Behold, it was for my peace that I had great bitterness;

But thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption.

For the grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee.

The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day."

Very fruitful were the remaining years of Hezekiah's life, for he did all he could to restore prosperity. During the Assyrian siege he had been very energetic in building up the ruined fortifications. He also made a vast pool, called now the Pool of Siloam, and dug out a conduit or as we call it, an aqueduct, from it to a spring that was fed from the mountains by the rains. He thus supplied the city with water. The old city wall was restored and a second wall built around it. Walls were the most important defenses of ancient cities. He also had arms made in large quantities. Now that the enemy was gone and was too much involved in distant uprisings to attack Judah again, Hezekiah took heart to beautify Jerusalem. The neighboring princes were glad to

make peace with him. Many gifts to adorn the city came from the people. So improved in arts and handicrafts had the Hebrews become, that there was no need to call in foreign experts or skilled workmen from Tyre, as in the days of Solomon, either for the military defenses before the siege or for the artistic embellishment after it. The Hebrews had also learnt mining, which they put to account, no doubt at this time.

Hezekiah's last years were rendered happy by seeing his nation secure and his people in a better moral condition than when he began to reign. He was spared the knowledge that his own son would undo all his reforms. This reign was afterwards looked upon almost as a golden age. Many psalms were written in this happy period, breathing joyous faith. Hezekiah, indeed, was a man of literary tastes and fostered art and writing. Being the last king who was righteous, prosperous, and whose life was spared for a good old age, he has been somewhat idealized.

"He trusted in the Lord God of Israel, so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor among them that were before him. For he cleaved to the Lord; he departed not from following him, but kept his commandments, and the Lord was with him; whithersoever he went, therefore he prospered."

MANASSEH, being but a boy of twelve at his father's death, unfortunately fell under the influence of the

nobility, who were not of the prophetic party, faithful to God, but rather of the heathen party. They were luxurious and dissipated, caring only for pleasure. They enjoyed the gay times at the heathen festivals, where they gave way freely to every base passion. They liked not the austere rule of the prophets, who put restraint on all sin and impurity, and they had looked on Hezekiah's reforms with much impatience. They missed the wild Canaanite revelry. They were as superstitious too as the ignorant masses, believing in witchcraft, sorcery and omens. Against all these evils the prophets had preached time and again, and Isaiah had been bitingly severe. But the old seer who kept Judah straight for so many years, and who had inspired Hezekiah's reforms, was dead now.

Perhaps he was slain by them. All the good men appointed in the past reign to important offices were spitefully deposed, and corrupt creatures, who would betray their charge for personal gain, put in their places. The party of corruption had the upper hand and proposed to keep it. The staunch and faithful were persecuted and some were put to death, and the young king Manasseh naturally followed the leading of his frivolous and wanton counselors. His mother's influence was also not good; there is no greater misfortune in life than to have a bad mother. Not content with the images around him, he must needs introduce new idolatrous absurdities from

Assyria, as Ahaz had done. Not all this was done out of pure wickedness, but from superstition, because they knew no better.

The good work of Isaiah, Micah and Hezekiah was apparently undone. Idolatry ran riot in Judah again; the moral tone of the nation fell. All the "high places," infamous from their association of lewd custom, were restored, altars were raised to Baal to sun worship, moon worship and star worship, copying the manner of the Assyrians. A new goddess, called "The Queen of Heaven," was adored. But, worst of all, following the footsteps of Ahaz, Manasseh introduced that most revolting and most savage of all heathen outrages—the sacrifices of children to the idol Moloch! He set the example by sacrificing his eldest child. The valley of Hinnom was devoted to this frightful practice. The Hebrew of valley is *gé*, hence *Ge-Hinnom* has come to mean the accursed spot—the valley of doom. Topheth, one part of it, also has this gloomy association. Here are his doings in the Bible words:

"Manasseh did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, after the abominations of the heathen; he reared up altars to Baal, as did Ahab, king of Israel. And he made his son to pass through the fire, and used divinations and wizards. He wrought much wickedness in the sight of the Lord. And he set the graven image of Astarte in the house of the Lord, who had said, 'Here will I put my name forever.' Moreover Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he filled Jerusalem from one end to

another; beside his sin wherein he made Judah to sin in doing that which was evil in the sight of the Lord."

For forty-five years this king held the throne of Judah, and this condition of things prevailed. The prophet Zephaniah also denounces the sins of this time and preaches of the terrible consequences of the wrath of God. All the good we can say of Manasseh is that he kept peace with his neighbors; he remained a vassal of Assyria, to whom therefore he paid tribute.

His son, AMON, who succeeded him, followed in his footsteps; but his reign of evil, however, was cut short after two years, when he was murdered by his own servants.

For about half a century then, nothing was heard of the prophet party of God and righteousness, though some psalms may belong to this period. But that they were zealously working in secret for religion's cause is proved by their occasional persecution. They were among the first *martyrs* for conscience's sake. Perhaps the very sorrows of the faithful helped the religious cause, for the prophetic teachings were sinking into the hearts of the thoughtful, and the sufferings of the martyrs gave new inspiration. So we need not be surprised that the sinful darkness of the reign of Manasseh and Amon slowly rolled away before the light of the better spirit that dawned in the reign of Josiah.

These words of Micah, who may possibly have

lived to see the evils of Manasseh, may have been intended to describe them:

Woe to them that devise iniquity and work evil.
 As soon as the morning is light they practice it, because the
 power is in their hand.
 They covet fields and seize them, houses and take them away.
 They oppress a man and his house, a man and his heritage.
 Their hands are upon that which is evil to do it diligently.
 The best of them is as a briar.
 The most upright as a thorny hedge.
 The son dishonoreth his father.
 The daughter riseth up against her mother.
 A man's enemies are those of his own house.

But as for me, I will look unto the Lord;
 I will wait for the God of my salvation;
 My God will hear me.
 I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned
 against him;
 Until he plead my cause and execute judgment for me.
 He will bring me forth to the light,
 And I shall behold his righteousness.

How does the martyr help the cause for which he suffers?

NOTES FOR TEACHERS AND ADVANCED PUPILS.

Isaiah's policy, like that of Washington, was "Avoid entangling alliances." It probably saved Judah from the fate of Israel.

The supply of water to Jerusalem is still a problem to-day, and the aqueducts of Solomon and Hezekiah are being now put to use. See Montefiore's "Bible for Home Use," vol. i., page 384.

Hezekiah's was undoubtedly a literary age. We do not know how much of the Biblical books and other works, since lost, belong

to this time. A body of scholars was around him to compile records and wise sayings, parables, and poems. Notice this superscription of Proverbs xxv.; "These are Proverbs of Solomon which *the men of Hezekiah*, king of Judah, copied out.*" Compare this with the Elizabethan age in England.

The seventh century was very stirring in upheavals around Judah. The prophet Nahum foresees the fall of Nineveh.

Compare the reign of license of Charles II., following the Puritan strictness of Cromwell with the similar sequence of Hezekiah and Manasseh. Such reactions are not uncommon in history. It must not be forgotten that Hezekiah had not all the people with him when making his reforms. He was somewhat in advance of the great body of the people. Hence they so easily fell away at his death.

Since the sun was believed by the ancients to be a flaming chariot drawn by swift horses, chariots and horses were dedicated to its service. Tradition says that Manasseh himself drove a sun-chariot each morning to worship the sun at its rising. Superstition in connection with fire, perhaps a survival of sun-worship, was very widely diffused. Passing children through a fire with many variations, is practiced in some remote places even to-day.

Legend says that on his deathbed, Isaiah revealed to Hezekiah how wicked his son, Manasseh, would be. The King replied: "I would rather die without posterity than leave behind me a son who would persecute the righteous."

Another legend: While Isaiah was being sawn asunder he said to his tormentors: "Thou canst do nothing against me, thou canst but take from me my miserable life."



PALESTINE SHEEP. page 218.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE INFLUENCE OF "THE LAW."

BIBLE TEXT: "For this commandment is not too hard for thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, ...neither is it beyond the sea;...but the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it." *Deut. xxx., 11-14.*

JOSIAH was but a lad of eight when he came to the throne. And although his reign is said to begin officially from the death of his father, as in every instance where the heir to the throne was a youth, and although there is no actual mention of a regent in the Bible, undoubtedly in each of these instances the reins of government must have been in older hands. Therefore, in the early years of his rule, there was little to indicate the great religious revival that was to distinguish his reign.

But the young king, while yet a lad, showed that his inclinations were with the religious party, to whom belonged the prophets, of course, but many of the priests also. We said that while Isaiah and Micah exercised a good influence for a time and brought about the reforms of Hezekiah, that the people soon lapsed into the same ignorance and evil. So, at least, it appears on the surface. But we must learn to look beneath the surface of things. In the study of history and of life we cannot always expect immediate results, nor can we always find immediate

caules. The fruit does not spring from the earth the moment we drop the seed. The teachings of Isaiah and Micah were *not* forgotten, in spite of the religious relapse.

God is patient. Great truths progress slowly, and are progressing even while for a moment they seem to be taking a step back. The seeds sown by Isaiah took root in the heart of Josiah.

Josiah may also have been influenced by the young prophet, Jeremiah, of whom we shall hear a good deal. We shall see him taking the same important place in national affairs that Isaiah had taken before him, though, alas! not destined to see the same prosperity.

But the deciding factor in bringing about this moral advance we have not yet mentioned. It was the revelation of the religious duties found in the book of DEUTERONOMY. While some of its lessons may have been expounded by the prophets for centuries, while some of them were even ascribed to Moses, they were not written down and read to the people until the reign of Josiah.

When Hilkiyah, the priest in the year 621, showed this book of law to the king, it startled him. He rent his clothes and said:

"Go ye, inquire of the Lord for me, and for the people, and for all Judah concerning the words of this book that is found; for great is the wrath of the Lord that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened to the

words of this book, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us."

"So they went unto Huldah, the prophetess, and communed with her. And she said unto them: 'Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Tell the man that sent you to me, Thus saith the Lord, Behold I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the words of the book which the king of Judah hath read. Because they have forsaken me and have burned incense unto other gods, therefore my wrath shall be kindled against this place, and shall not be quenched.'"

Of Huldah we would like to know more. Undoubtedly, she greatly influenced the king and the people in reforming the nation by carrying out the duties of this newly discovered Law. Was it, then, a new revelation? No! it was but the writing down and arranging in codified form of much that had been preached by the prophets years before. It must also not be forgotten that the religion of Israel had been neglected for some sixty years.

"Josiah went up to the house of the Lord, and with him the priests and prophets, and all the people both small and great; and he read all the words of the book of the covenant."

It stirred their religious feelings so profoundly that they were impatiently zealous to obey all its commands:

"All the idols and all the abominations that were still in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem did Josiah put away, that he might fulfil the words of the Law. And the king commanded all the people, saying, Keep the Passover

unto the Lord your God, as it is written in the book of the covenant. Surely there was not holden such a Pass-over from the days of the judges that judged in Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel, nor of the kings of Judah. And like unto him there was none that turned to the Lord with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses.

If the reforms of Hezekiah were partial, the reforms of Josiah were thorough. Where Hezekiah swept away many of the external evidences of idolatry, Josiah plucked up the roots. Nothing that even had the association of image-worship was spared. Even harmless symbols were destroyed, for fear they might be used for witchcraft or what not. The reform was even carried to the North, where the old kingdom of Israel had been, now occupied by a mixed population of peasant Israelites and Cutheans. For when the declining Assyria was no longer able to maintain its distant conquests, it was supposed that Northern Israel went to the possession of Judah. So Josiah included it in his dominions; but it was his more in name than in fact. However, he and his followers went through the land with all the fervor of iconoclasts; they overthrew the altars, burned the vessels of Baal and the chariots of the sun, deposed the venal priests of Baal, exposed and eradicated the shameful and debasing practices that took shelter behind the hangings of the sanctuaries, and turned out the

miserable creatures who had charge of it. Sun-worship, Moloch-worship, and Ashtoreth-worship were overthrown together and their idols and vessels ground to powder.

Already, in vol. i. of this book, many of the commands in this Law are quoted and explained, and need not be quoted again. See chapters xxxvii., xxxix., xl., xli., xlii. We wish, however, to point out one of its most important ceremonial regulations, for which Isaiah, Micah, and Hezekiah had prepared the way. This command reads as follows:

"Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt-offerings in every place that thou seest; but in the place which the Eternal shall choose in one of thy tribes [in Jerusalem, the capital]; there only shalt thou offer thy burnt-offerings."

From this time on, then, all the different altars that were scattered over the land were to be abolished, and sacrifices were only to be made at the temple of Jerusalem, or Zion, as it is more often called, which, now more than ever, came to be regarded as the Holy City.

This may not seem to you a very important principle, and yet it was a most progressive step in the development of Judaism. This was its object: As long as there were sanctuaries for sacrifice all over the country, just so long would idolatry prevail. For in small, distant places, where both people and priests were more or less ignorant and superstitious,

the sacrificial customs of heathen neighbors would unconsciously creep in; and while the people thought they were worshiping God, they were at times little better than idolators. But in Jerusalem, the capital, the natural centre of the highest thought and the most learned priests, these abuses would be less likely.

Secondly, it made it impossible for every beast slaughtered for food to be religiously sacrificed first before it could be eaten, which was the old rule; so *that* custom dropped away altogether, and sacrifices were confined to religious purposes only. But this new regulation made many of these impracticable, too. *Sacrifice being made harder, became rarer.* Do you not see the purpose of the prophets in this rule—how they were gradually preparing the way for the complete abolition of sacrifice, which, you know, they one and all preached unceasingly?

The people in the villages, deprived of the sacrifices, were encouragingly led by the prophets to give higher and worthier expression to their religious longings through prayer, love of God, purity of life. Micah sums up the whole tendency of the time in the famous chapter in which he depicts, so to speak, God holding a controversy with His people.

The Divine Declaration:

"O my people, what have I done to thee, and wherein have I wearied thee? Testify against me.

Question of the People:

"Wherewith shall I come before the Lord and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams or with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression (as did Ahaz and Manasseh), the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"

The Prophet's Reply:

"He hath told thee, O man, what is good. And what doth the Lord thy God require of thee? Nothing but to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God."

This reform of Josiah was the turning point in Jewish history. All the religious tendencies that have distinguished the Jews since that day began through the spread of THE LAW.

Can you give any instance where a book has reformed a nation?

NOTES FOR TEACHERS AND ADVANCED PUPILS.

This Law was part of the Mosaic code, modified and brought down to date—our present book of Deuteronomy. It was the combined work of priests and prophets. In reducing these calls to righteousness, these sublime teaching of tender humanity preached by the prophets, to codified laws, they lost, perhaps, something of their spirit. Indeed, it is hard to put the soul's yearning toward God, which is the very essence of religion, into the form of laws at all. So those who looked to the Law as the embodiment of all religion expected too much from it. They did not always discriminate either between ceremonial laws and moral laws. At a later day the prophet Jeremiah had to remind the people that they were exaggerating the letter of the Law and for-

getting its spirit. But there are some magnificent passages in Deuteronomy that read just like the great prophecies.

The law of Josiah (see Deut. iv.-xxvii.). Some characteristics: It is less law than exhortation; it is a kindly code that takes the weak completely under its protection; it pictures a community morally responsible, no man for himself; it is, too, a demand for justice to the poor. This is one of Israel's greatest contributions to humanity,

Its tendency, further, was to make religion stand distinct from the state. This was to have important consequences later on.

Zephaniah, who preached in the earlier part of Josiah's reign, also contributed his share toward the religious revival.

Look up all the quotations in the prophets condemning animal sacrifice.

CHAPTER XXV.

JEREMIAH—THE MAN OF SORROWS.

BIBLE TEXT: "What? Shall we receive good at the hands of God and shall we not receive evil?"

Job ii. 10.

The further we advance in the history of Israel the more necessary does it become to glance at other nations. For our ancestors were gradually coming in contact with all the great peoples of the earth.

In these words Jeremiah described the approach of a new enemy—the Scythians:

"Set up a standard toward Zion, flee for safety; stay not, for I will bring evil from the north and a great destruction.

"Behold a people cometh from the north country, and a great nation shall be stirred up from the uttermost parts of the

earth. They lay hold on bow and spear; they are cruel and have no mercy; their voice roareth like the sea, and they ride upon horses. Every one set in array as a man to the battle against thee, O daughter of Zion."

This people, who may perhaps have sprung from the race of Finns, came from the desert Steppes of what is now Russia, and began making inroads into Asia. They came from across that long mountain range that in those days separated barbarism from civilization. The men of Judah had ceased to fear Assyria; she was losing fast and, attacked by Medes and Babylonians, had as much as she could do to hold her own, without hoping to make distant conquests any more. But now came the news that these wild hordes of Scythians had saved Nineveh from its enemies and were making conquests fast through all Asia, plundering and devastating on all sides. Yes, they saved the Assyrians from their enemies, but only to plunder them themselves.

But, to Judah's joy, they skirted, but did not touch her borders. They approached Egypt, but were bought off and took their arms in a new direction. The movement of this people was probably part of that great migration of races that was taking place in Europe and Asia, and which led to the gradual settlement of distant lands. Nations were coming into prominence, and then falling into decay again, so quickly, that a glance each few years at the great powers of the ancient world, find their relations

changed. Of the Scythians we seem to hear no more in Israel's history. They had shot across their horizon like a meteor, only to be lost in the darkness again.

The Babylonians and Medes besiege Nineveh once more. The successors of Sennacherib—Essarhaddon and Assurbanapal—had made great conquests, nevertheless Assyria had steadily declined. Now its days are numbered. In the year 605 B. C. E. Nineveh fell and Sardanapalus, its last king, burnt himself in his citadel, reminding us of the end of Zimri. Thus Assyria passes noiselessly out of existence.

Egypt, in the meantime, by uniting the states into which it had been divided into one solid empire, becomes for the moment the greatest, and is ambitious for broad conquest as Assyria had been. Necho, its king, is anxious to extend his territory to the Euphrates. He began making conquest east and south, and was about to march northward to check the growing power of Babylon.

Judah is again between two fires; with which shall it ally itself? Necho marches forward, and encamps in the plain of Jezreel, in the old Northern Kingdom, which Josiah now regards as part of his territory. Pharaoh-Necho only uses it as a stopping place on his forward march to attack Babylon, and Josiah would have done better to have awaited the result of that contest. Instead of this, he seemed to consider it a patriotic duty immediately to attempt to oppose Necho's march, and met him with his army

at Megiddo, on the plain of Jezreel. Although Necho assured him that it was not against Judah that he was making war, Josiah persisted. Like Ahab of Israel, he too went forth to battle disguised as a common soldier, and, alas for the irony of fate, like Ahab too, he was fatally wounded in his chariot and was brought home dead. He was just at the dawn of a great career. The whole nation mourned him. In bitter lamentation Jeremiah bewailed the national loss. And for many a long day did the singers chant his lament on the sad anniversary.

But the later consequences of this defeat were even more disastrous still.

Judah now became a vassal in Egypt, having to pay to it annually a hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold. Although the people placed Jehoahaz, the younger son of Josiah, on the throne, Necho refused to sanction this appointment, and in order to remind the people that he was their master he carried off Jehoahaz prisoner and appointed the subservient Eliakim, Josiah's elder son, in his stead and changed his name to Jehoiakim. The people must have had good reason for preferring the younger brother; nor was their distrust of Jehoiakim ill-founded. He was a worthless fellow, the last person to continue his father's religious reformation. So little sympathy did he show for the misfortunes of his people, that in addition to the burdens of Egypt, he imposed further taxation upon them to gratify a vanity for

building at an hour when the life of his nation hung in the balance. He reminds us of that king of France, who went on rioting in luxury while his people were suffering, not caring whether it would collapse in awful ruin, provided it happened after he was dead.

This is how Jeremiah describes the times:

- “Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by injustice; that useth his neighbor's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work; that saith, I will build me a spacious house and large chambers, and cutteth him out windows; and it is ceiled with cedar, and painted with vermilion. Shalt thou reign, because thou strivest to excel in cedar? Did not thy father eat and drink, and do judgment and justice, and then it was well with him? He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well: was not this to know me saith the Lord? But thine eyes and thine heart are not but for thy covetousness, and for to shed innocent blood, and for oppression, and for violence, to do it.”

Jeremiah was born at Anathoth, a small village near Jerusalem. Like Samuel, he felt the call of God within him early in life. Though he first preached at his native place, he soon went to the capital, where life is always most intense and temptation most perilous. Here must he preach his message. This is how he describes the divine summons:

- “Then the word of the Lord came unto me saying, Before thy birth I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. Then said I, Ah, Lord God! behold I cannot speak: for I am a child. But the Lord said unto me, Say

not, I am a child : for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, said the Lord. Then the Lord put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth. See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant. Lo, I will call all the families of the kingdoms of the north, saith the Lord; and they shall come, and they shall set every one his throne at the entering of the gates of Jerusalem, and against all the walls thereof round about, and against all the cities of Judah. And I will utter my judgments against them touching all their wickedness, who have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, and worshiped the works of their own hands. Thou, therefore, gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee: be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them. For, behold, I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land. And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee."

Here is one of his early addresses that well presents the spirit of the man:

"The word of the Lord came to me, saying, Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the Lord; I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel was holiness unto the Lord, and the first fruits of his increase; all that

devour him shall offend; evil shall come upon them, saith the Lord. Thus saith the Lord, What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain? Neither said they, Where is the Lord that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, that led us through the wilderness, through a land of deserts and of pits, through a land of drought and of the shadows of death, through a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt? And I brought you into a plentiful country, to eat the fruit thereof and the goodness thereof; but when ye entered, ye defiled my land, and made mine heritage an abomination. The priests said not, Where is the Lord? and they that handle the law knew me not: the pastors also transgressed against me, and the prophets prophecied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit. Wherefore I will yet plead with you, saith the Lord, and with your children's children will I plead. For pass over the isles of Chittim, and see; and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there be such a thing. Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit. For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water."

Jeremiah has been called the prophet of woe, for he saw all misfortunes crowd on his nation, and lived to lament the series of tragedies, that brought about its awful doom. We know more of him than of any other prophet and much of the history of this time is contained in his writings.

He was well educated in the history of his people. Serious by nature, possibly the persecutions of the

righteous, witnessed in his early life in the days of Manasseh, may have saddened him. He was a prophet of gloom in another sense, in that he stood alone. How pathetic to be misunderstood by the very people he wished to benefit. In moments of despondency he regrets his high mission. "Wherefore was I born to see labor and sorrow that my eyes should be consumed with shame."

We can watch his spiritual growth. His outbreaks at times are very bitter against the prophets and the house of Jehoiakim. But later he frees himself from unworthy animosity. So we feel him near to us by this human failing and this noble striving not to permit his impatience of wrong to lead him to condemn too severely. Yet he thoroughly loves the people, he rebukes and bemoans their sins as though they were the sins of his own family. He pleads with God for them rather than preaching God against them—though at times he feels he must do that, too.

He had good cause to denounce his nation's apostacy. For under Jehoiakim's lead some of the people had gone back to the old idolatries again. But Jehoiakim was not the only cause of this religious relapse. The people had lost faith in God, now that the good king Josiah was defeated and slain. What was the use of worshiping Him, they asked themselves, if He did not save them in battle? Perhaps they had made a mistake in renouncing the old

altars and images and high places; and so they began restoring them. Had not the promises in the Law read to them by Josiah come to nothing? What was the use of being obedient and fulfilling all the laws? they might as well go back to idolatry again. How strange such reasoning sounds to us to-day!

Jeremiah tried to show them that even though they had overthrown the altars all over the country, and now offered their sacrifices only in the sanctuary at Jerusalem, that was not sufficient to prove that they were God-fearing and righteous. To win God's grace it is not enough to change the forms of worship, they must change the heart. They must strive to come nearer to God by purity of life. If they trusted too much merely in the sanctuary and its forms, they would make it nothing better than an idol too. Thus Jeremiah raises the religious ideal and presents a lesson for all mankind:

“Amend your ways and doings. Trust not in lying words shouting ‘the Sanctuary of the Lord!’ ‘the Sanctuary of the Lord!’ ‘the Sanctuary of the Lord!’ Nay, but if you thoroughly amend your ways and your doings, if ye thoroughly execute justice between man and his neighbor, oppress not the stranger, the fatherless and the widow, and shed not innocent blood: then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land I gave to your fathers forever. Think you, you can steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, and burn incense to Baal—and that then you can come and stand before me in this House and say, ‘We are delivered?’ That you may forsooth, do all these abominations?”

Then he takes up the same cry as the prophets before him :

“ Thus saith the Eternal God, Add your burnt offerings, to your sacrifices and—eat them. For I did not command your fathers when I brought them forth from Egypt concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices. But this I commanded them ‘Hearken to my voice, and I will be your God and ye shall be my people. Walk ye in the way that I command you that it may be well with you.’ ”

But the defeat at Megiddo admitted of another explanation which even Jeremiah had not yet realized, since it was one of the last moral truths to dawn on the mind of man. We must not do good for the sake of being successful, and refrain from sin only for fear of punishment. We must do good, whatever happens. God does not promise material prosperity to every good man, for then he would only be good for the sake of the prosperity, and it would be goodness no longer. We must trust God even in darkness and sorrow—that is the supreme rest of faith. We cannot hope always to understand His ways ; sometimes the righteous suffer and the wicked triumph ; yet God watches over all, and has a wise and benevolent purpose in all He does. Some nations tried to prove their gods by their conquests ; it was reserved for Judah to prove God by their defeat.

Are life's misfortunes punishment of God ?

NOTES FOR TEACHERS AND ADVANCED PUPILS.

The Scythians came from the neighborhood of Russia and the

Caspian Sea. They carried devastation wherever they went, sparing neither age nor sex. Bethshean, changed by them to Scythopolis, was the only abiding mark of their presence in Canaan. Their strength was soon spent. Zeph. i. 15-18 may refer to them.

It was customary to change the names of conquered princes and of servants as a mark of their subordination. See Gen. xli. 46; Dav., i. 7; 1 King xxiv. 17; Ezra v. 14.

Compare the call of Jeremiah with that of Isaiah. Do you remember the call of Abraham, of Moses, of Samuel?

Like Jeremiah, Mendelssohn, who did so much for the emancipation of the Jews in Germany in the last century, was misunderstood by the people he wished to help.

In denouncing form and pleading for spirit, Jeremiah was still a *religious* preacher like Hosea, rather than a *moral* preacher only like Amos. What is the difference?

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE BABYLONIANS.

BIBLE TEXT: "Know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and a bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God."
Jeremiah, ii. 19.

Assyria was overthrown, and the Babylonians became, for the time being, the greatest power in the world. It was their turn now to carry the standard of conquest through all Asia. The unearthing of brick tablets containing cuneiform inscriptions, from the ruins of the cities that stood on the banks of the Tigris and the Euphrates, has of late taught us a good deal about the Babylonians.

They were a nation made up of mixed races, partly Turanian (related to the Chinese) and partly Semitic; it is not always possible to distinguish them from the Assyrians, and the two names seem to be used indiscriminately.

The Greeks learned their system of weights and measures from them, for they were clever in the use of numbers. They were great astronomers, and from them we get the signs of the zodiac and the week of seven days. They were a literary people, and have left us chronicles of their history and their beliefs, as well as treatises on grammar and geography. They were poets, too—some epics still surviving. They had a library in every large city, where, instead of books, there were brick tablets. It is from these brick tablets that we learn so much about them. They were also skilled in magic, and some remnants of gems and pottery show us their progress in art. They were active in commerce, and they even had some sort of money in circulation. Architecture ranked high with them; they built bridges, embankments, canals, and sluices, while the walls of Babylon, with their hundred brazen gates and their marvelous hanging gardens, were among the wonders of the ancient world.

But, like most of the people with whom Israel had come in contact, they were luxurious and immoral. Their religion was much the same as that of the Phœnicians; there was a similarity in all

these ancient cults. But the Babylonians were particularly star-worshippers. The vast Babylonian plains giving uninterrupted view of the heavens suggested the dominance of the stars. It explained, too, their knowledge of astronomy. But all nature-worship was immoral.

Pharaoh-Necho of Egypt was defeated by the Babylonians, or Chaldeans, as they are more often called in the Bible, at Carchemish (Circesium), on the Euphrates, in the year 604. In this important battle he was completely defeated, and fled in dismay to his own land. This great victory created a new epoch in history. The Babylonian who achieved it was NEBUCHADREZZAR (less correctly spelt Nebuchadnezzar), who was allied to the Medes also by marriage. At the death of his father, Nabopolassar, just after this victory, he became king of Babylon. Very soon his sway extended over all Palestine, as far as the borders of Egypt. What a pity Josiah had not waited!—the destiny of Judah might have been changed.

While Judah rejoiced at Necho's defeat, their condition was not much improved. First the vassal of Egypt, now the vassal of Babylon; she had simply changed masters. Some of these living in the Northern Kingdom came down to Judah now. When Nebuchadrézzar approached Judah, Jehoiakim at once submitted,—much to the indignation of the

patriotic party—and so did all the surrounding countries. But they were not much disturbed by the new lord, and continued in the same semi-dependent state. Just as Isaiah regarded Assyria as the instrument of God's purpose, so now Jeremiah looks upon Babylon as a divine agent. But the people would not accept this submission to Babylon, and, regardless of consequences, they determined on revolt. In the hearts of all there lurked a conviction that Zion could never be ultimately destroyed. It was "God's City," in so far as it was the place above all others that was the centre of His worship. Surely He would never abandon it to the heathen, but would save it in some miraculous way, even at the eleventh hour! Could their religion survive with their holy city destroyed? Yes, it could. That was to be the test of its greatness—the hardest lesson that Judah had yet to learn. God is confined to no one city or locality. He can be worshiped in Egypt just as well as in Judah. He will hear the prayers of His people in Babylon as readily as he heard them in Zion.

The party that decided to throw discretion to the winds and assert its independence against Babylon—urged on, perhaps, by Necho of Egypt—grew in numbers, in spite of the advice and preaching of Jeremiah. At last the weak king was carried with them. Judah threw down the gauntlet to Babylon. Egypt, when it came to the issue, was in no position to help them, and it is doubtful whether this selfish

nation was willing in any event. The other vassals of Nebuchadrezzar who had remained faithful, together with his resident regiments, were ordered to put down the rebellion in his absence. So Judah soon found itself surrounded by Syrians, Moabites, and Ammonites on every side, all glad to assist in the overthrow of an old enemy. At last Nebuchadrezzar himself arrived, and the awful siege began, and lasted for three years. The end was very near now.

Jeremiah moved among the people during this Babylonian siege, carrying his message of woe and repentance, just as Isaiah had been the leading spirit in the Assyrian siege. But while his words had been full of hope and encouragement, Jeremiah spoke of calamity, for times were desperate now.

To make his denunciations of gloom and predictions of overthrow still more terrible and convincing, he would act out his oracle in the form of a symbol or object lesson—a favorite method of all the prophets. Once he hid a linen girdle in the bed of the river, and showed it to the people, all torn and marred, saying: "Thus saith the Eternal, so will the pride of Jerusalem be marred." On another occasion he took an earthenware vessel and shattered it to pieces, declaring at the same moment:

"Thus says the Eternal, 'I will shatter the people that dwell in this city as one shatters an earthen vessel that cannot be pieced together again.'"

At another time he put a yoke round his neck to point out the advisability of submitting quietly to the King of Babylon.

Although he was called a "brazen wall," to indicate his unflinching determination to denounce all wrong, still he was one of the most tender-hearted of men. But so alarmed were the nobles and priests at his severe denunciations, that he was scourged and even put in the stocks.

Once he stood at the entrance of the Temple and uttered this warning:

"Thus saith the Lord: If ye will not hearken to me, to walk in my law, which I have set before you, then will I make this house like Shiloh, and will make this city a curse to all the nations of the earth."

At these words he was seized by the priests and prophets and threatened with death.

"Then spake Jeremiah unto all the princes and to all the people, saying, The Lord sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city all the words that ye have heard. Therefore now amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the Lord your God; and the Lord will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced against you. As for me, behold, I am in your hand; do with me as seemeth good and meet unto you. But know ye for certain, that if ye put me to death, ye shall surely bring innocent blood upon yourselves, and upon this city and upon the inhabitants thereof: for of a truth the Lord hath sent me unto you to speak all these words in your ears.

"Then said the princes and all the people unto the priests

and to the prophets: This man is not worthy to die: for he hath spoken to us in the name of the Lord our God. Then rose up certain of the elders of the land, and spake to all the assembly of the people, saying, Micah prophesied, and spake to all the people of Judah, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts: Zion shall be ploughed like a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the House as the high places of a forest. Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah put him at all to death? did he not fear the Lord, and besought the Lord, and the Lord repented him of the evil which he had pronounced against them? Thus might we procure great evil against our souls."

Jeremiah was let go, for the princes and people were on his side, but his supporters grew less from day to day.

He was now prevented from entering the Temple to address the people, for, like Amos, "the land could not bear his words." He dictated his message to his faithful disciple Baruch, bidding him read it in the Lord's House on a fast-day, when all would be assembled. "It may be," he said, "that they will return from their evil way." This was the fifth year of King Jehoiakim. Every one was filled with excitement and alarm at the awful outlook his words pictured. The message was next read to the princes and later to the king. Jehoiakim was so angry that he cut it to pieces and threw it into the burning brazier before him. Jeremiah and Baruch would have been slain could they have been found at that moment. They were in hiding.

But Jeremiah took out another roll and wrote out the same warning in severer terms. He was growing daily more unpopular, but "we love him for enemies he made." We have seen that the priests and *professional* prophets opposed him, being either worldly or short-sighted. "They delude the people," he said, "crying, 'Peace! peace!' when there is no peace. Both priest and prophet are profane."

They might have been less incensed against Jeremiah if they had trusted him less. For twenty-three years he had forewarned them of an approaching enemy, only to be scorned and laughed at and called a madman. But when the Babylonians appeared and verified his predictions, their ridicule was changed into awe. Later on the so-called prophets were speaking hopefully of the outcome of Judah's struggle with Babylon, but Jeremiah presented picture after picture of defeat. They had sinned; they must suffer. He stood alone preaching righteousness as the only hope of salvation. This sad, earnest man refrained from marrying, feeling that at these awful times the joys of domestic life were not for him.

Habbakuk, another prophet, preached, it is true, in the same strain, but he was not so uncompromisingly severe as Jeremiah; he thought that Judah had suffered sufficiently, and that redemption was now at hand.

During the siege Jehoiakim died, and was suc-

ceeded by his son Jehoiakin, 597. Further resistance was hopeless. The young king, at the counsel of his mother, who had great influence over him, surrendered to Nebuchadrezzar. With rare moderation, the conqueror shed not a drop of blood. For nigh forty years the unfortunate king was kept in prison, at last to be released in his old age by the successor of Nebuchadrezzar. In mentioning this act of kindness, we have for a moment glanced ahead of our story.

The Babylonians followed the example of the Assyrians in removing the flower of the nation, the royalty, nobility, and leading citizens, to some distant province, expecting, though in vain, to eradicate the vitality of the nation in that way. Some forty thousand were thus torn away from their beloved land and exiled to Babylonia. Among them was a great prophet named Ezekiel, of whom we shall hear later. Many had taken refuge in Egypt. But some prophets and teachers were left in the land, who would still keep up the fight.

So the hoped-for redemption had not come. The city of Zion was in the hands of the stranger. The treasures of Temple and palace were taken, though the building itself and its protecting walls were left intact. But the worst had not yet come.

In these words Jeremiah bemoans the misfortunes of the exiles:

“Oh, that I could comfort myself against sorrow, my heart

is faint within me. Behold the cry of my people from a land that is very far off. Is not the Lord in Zion, is not her King within her? The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved. For the hurt of my people am I hurt. Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Oh that mine head were waters and mine eyes a fountain of tears, then might I weep night and day for the slain of my people."

What happened to the Temple at Shiloh?

NOTES FOR TEACHERS AND ADVANCED PUPILS.

The seven wonders of the ancient world were:

Hanging Gardens of Semanimis, at Babylon.

Pyramids of Egypt.

Temple of Diana, at Ephesus.

Statue of Jupiter at Athens, by Phidias.

The Mausoleum at Halicarnassus.

The Colossus at Rhodes.

The Pharos of Alexandria.

Explain the signs of the zodiac.

Jeremiah has been termed the "prophet of unwelcome truth."

Compare him with Micaiah, chap. vi.

"To side with truth is noble when we share her humble crust,
Not when her cause is popular and it is profitable to be just."

We cannot give many of the beautiful quotations from the prophets in the limits of this little work. Read to the class Jer. xix., where that famous metaphor, "Man is as clay in the hands of the potter," is here presented as a symbol.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE FALL OF JERUSALEM.

BIBLE TEXT: "How can I endure the evil that shall come upon my people, or how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?" *Esther viii. 6.*

A flicker of national life was still kept up in the humbler masses that were left behind. ZEDEKIAH, uncle of the exiled king and son of Josiah, was made vassal monarch; what a pitiful throne; and yet it might have continued as a modest province of Babylon. For Nebuchadrezzar found it useful as a bulwark against Egypt. Zedekiah was a man of good intentions but weak will, by no means suited to control this forlorn remnant of a people, whom, fast pressing misfortunes had deprived of patience, calmness, and prudence. In fact, they had become demoralized. In a reckless way they still expected to win their independence again.

The only calm one among them, who saw his people's condition in its true gravity, was Jeremiah. He now realized that the future of his people was with the exiles in Babylon. He sent them word to cherish no vain hopes that they could defeat their conquerors, but to reconcile themselves in their new home and try to become good subjects of it:

"Build houses and dwell in them, plant gardens and eat the fruit thereof; seek the peace of the country whither you have been carried away captive, and pray for its welfare, for in its peace shall ye obtain peace. Let not your pro-

phets nor your diviners deceive you and do not harken to dreams. For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. And I will be found of you, saith the Lord: and I will turn away your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith the Lord; and I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive.

But to the fanatic majority, prayer for the welfare of the enemy's land seemed very unpatriotic; it infuriated them without discouraging their wild scheme of insurrection. Nor did they put much faith in the future promise of restoration. It was too distant to satisfy them. This condition of nervous excitement continued for about four years, and at last Zedekiah entered into an alliance against Babylon with the surrounding tributaries, *i. e.*, with the very people who had assisted at Judah's discomfiture a few years before. Safe allies indeed! But despair chooses its friends blindly. The conspiracy came to nothing, however, because Egypt refused to join it, and they were certainly not mad enough to rebel without that substantial power behind them. But no sooner did a king, hostile to Babylon, occupy the throne of Egypt than immediately Zedekiah sent to him for alliance against his lord.

The die was cast. Nebuchadrezzar was a just but

stern man; Zedekiah had sworn allegiance to him; he now sent an army to reduce the rebellious vassal. Let us be fair to our enemies and acknowledge that he was by no means cruel, that he was a wise and far-seeing monarch and did much to strengthen and improve his empire. At the approach of the enemy, Judah found its false friends had all deserted it and left it alone to meet the enemy. How the last chapters of Israel's history were repeating themselves in Judah. Alas, those deluded patriots, they had already invited their own downfall, and yet we cannot but sympathize with them! They were a plucky people, those ancient Hebrews, and they tried to keep up their courage, with certain defeat staring them in the face.

At last in despair that they could not conceal, they sent for counsel to the much abused Jeremiah. He advised the only safe course—surrender to Babylon, and not to trust to the issue of battle. But they turned a deaf ear to his sensible counsel. Perhaps if they performed some righteous act, would God be merciful, they asked themselves? They determined to try. As if deeds performed under such conditions did not rob them of all merit! As if, too, we could fathom the ways of God to man, that are past our finding out, to decide for ourselves the methods of His providence. One of the laws read to them in the days of Josiah, was that they should release every slave after six years' service. They had neglected

this humane behest of late, as they had neglected many others—they would obey it now. At a solemn ceremony they swore to be true to it, and soon the command went forth that the slaves were to be freed.

In the meantime, Egypt approached to encounter the Chaldeans. This gave Judah hope, since the besieging army had to turn aside to meet the greater foe;—perhaps triumph would come to them at last, and Jeremiah turn out to be a false prophet after all? Already the nobles repented their momentary humanity that had been but the outcome of dire extremity, and refused to release their slaves. You can imagine how this angered the righteous Jeremiah, how scathingly he rebuked their broken promise with their continued violation of the law, and threatened terrible consequences:

“Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel: I made a covenant with your fathers in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, saying: At the end of seven years let ye go every man his brother a Hebrew, which hath been sold unto thee; and when he hath served thee six years, thou shalt let him go free from thee. And ye were now turned, and had done right in my sight, in proclaiming liberty every man to his neighbor; and ye had made a covenant before me in the house which is called by my name: But ye turned and polluted my name, and caused every man his servant, and every man his handmaid, whom he had set at liberty at their pleasure, to return, and brought them into subjection, to be unto you for servants and for handmaids. **There-**

fore thus saith the Lord: Ye have not hearkened unto me, in proclaiming liberty, every one to his brother, and every man to his neighbor: behold, I proclaim a liberty for you, saith the Lord, to the sword, to the pestilence, and to the famine; and I will make you to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth."

"Deceive not yourselves, saying the Chaldeans will surely depart from us; for they will not depart. Though you had smitten the whole army of the Chaldeans and there remained only their wounded, yet would they rise up and burn this city with fire."

Jeremiah was not only hated because of this unpromising attitude, but even his patriotism was doubted. One day he was rudely seized by a captain of the ward with these words, "Thou fallest away to the Chaldeans." "It is false," said the long-suffering man, "I fall not away to the Chaldeans." He was not listened to, but was hurried before the princes, who really believing the man a traitor, because they could not understand his lofty view of God's ways, cast him into prison.

In the meantime, Egypt had been repulsed and possibly a peace patched up, and Nebuchadrezzar's army was at the walls of Jerusalem again. One by one the cities of Judah had fallen—Lachish, Azekah, all of Benjamin. Zedekiah secretly sent to Jeremiah from the prison to ask what he believed the outlook was. In spite of their ill-treating and denouncing this man, at the bottom of their hearts they had faith in him! But Jeremiah refused to say a favorable

word, even to be saved from imprisonment. It was the same cry:

"You will be delivered into the hands of the king of Babylon; where now are your prophets, who prophesied—'the king of Babylon shall not come against you?'"

Jeremiah made but one request of the king: he begged not to be sent back to the loathsome dungeon, or it would be his death; he was placed in better quarters.

But the fanatical war party, who really were patriotic with a zeal worthy of a more hopeful cause, could not bear Jeremiah's words, "Who abideth in the city shall die by famine, sword and pestilence; who goeth over to the Chaldeans shall live." Was not this rank treason? Or else the prophet was a madman, which many believed. Would not such words sap the little courage left in the people at this distressing hour? Reasoning this way, the princes sent to the king:

"Let this man, we pray thee, be put to death; he weakeneth the hands of the men of war: he seeketh not the welfare of the people, but their hurt."

The weak Zedekiah yielded to their wishes. Jeremiah was thrown into a pit in which there was fortunately no water, though he was almost choked with mire. But a friend interceded with the wavering king, and Jeremiah was drawn from the pit, like Joseph of old. Again the king sent for the prophet, only to receive the same advice; but he was afraid

to surrender to the Chaldeans now, even if he wished it, fearing the fury of the people.

Jeremiah remained in prison while the awful siege went on. There was little attempt to take the impregnable fortress that Jerusalem really was, surrounded by nature with rocky barriers; and you will remember it needed all the courage and military skill of a Joab to take it from the Jebusites in David's day. But it had been much more elaborately fortified since then by successive kings of Judah. The only effectual way to take it was the method most popular in those times—to starve the people into submission.

So the miserable months went on, the people slowly starving—resorting to extreme and unnatural means to satisfy their craving for bread. Yet in spite of the scarcity both of defenders and of food, the finely fortified capital held out well. The Babylonians, in the meantime, were trying to undermine the walls by hurling their battering rams against them. Houses and palaces were falling fast. Jeremiah still uttered his mournful predictions that the beautiful city would fall. But he also held out to the people the hope that they would one day return to it again. And to assure them of the strength of this conviction, he, even at this dark moment, bought an estate in Anathoth, his birthplace. The deed of purchase was put in an earthen vessel, that it might last for many days.

"Houses and fields and vineyards shall yet be bought again in this land."

Jeremiah uttered this bold assurance at the moment when "the mounds of the besiegers reached unto the city:"

"Is there anything too hard for the Lord God of all flesh," he said.

Just imagine such faith as that! Like a light in the depth of darkness comes one of his pictures of the future.

For eighteen awful months the siege lasted, with occasional skirmishes in front of the walls. On the tenth of Tebeth, the first breach was made in the strong walls at last, in spite of the brave efforts of the people to stop it up in every possible way. The Chaldeans closed further in. No doubt of the result now. On the ninth of Ab—destined to be a fatal date in Jewish history—the lower city was taken. Then the king and his nobles gave up and fled like thieves in the night through one of the breaches across the Arabah, no longer hoping to defend the inner wall or upper citadel. Nebuchadrezzar entered Jerusalem. The walls of the city were razed to the ground—its stones rolled down the steep to Kedron. The beautiful Temple which Solomon had erected with so much rejoicing was burnt to ashes! What awful havoc followed! All the treasures remaining of Temple, palaces and homes were seized. The precious vessels, made with so much skill and con-

scientific care in King Solomon's days of prosperity and peace, were all now taken away. The soldiers rioted in plunder and outrage. The chief priests, generals, officers and nobles of Judah were all taken to Riblah, in Syria, where Nebuchadrezzar was staying. Here they were put to death. The fugitive Zedekiah was caught in the plains of Jericho; his sons were slain in his presence, and then his own eyes put out, and he was sent to languish in a dungeon in Babylon, where he died. Many other fugitives, who had hidden on cliffs and in caves were fearfully treated when discovered, after which they were either enslaved or hanged. Thus fell Jerusalem in the year 586. Here are some verses of its funeral dirge:

"How doth the city sit solitary that was full of people.
 She that was great among the nations and princess among the
 provinces,
 How has she become tributary.
 All her friends have dealt treacherously with her,
 They have become her enemies.
 Is this the city that men called the perfection of beauty, the
 joy of the whole earth?
 The ways of Zion do mourn, none come to the solemn
 assembly.
 Her gates are sunken in the ground, her bars are broken
 and destroyed.
 Her adversaries are become the head, her enemies prosper.
 Her young children have gone unto captivity before the
 adversary.
 Jerusalem remembereth in the days of her affliction and her
 miseries,
 All her pleasant things that were from the days of old.

Zion spreadeth forth her hands, there is none to comfort her.
Abroad the sword bereaveth, at home there is as death.

The Lord is righteous, for we have rebelled against his commandment;

Hear now, all ye peoples and behold our sorrow.

Remember, oh Lord, what has come upon us.

Behold and see our reproach."

"Our inheritance is turned unto strangers, our houses unto aliens.

We are orphaned and fatherless, our mothers are as widows.

The elders have ceased from the gate, the young men from their music.

The joy of our heart is ceased, our dance is turned to mourning.

The crown has fallen from our head.

Woe unto us, for we have sinned.

"It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.

They are new every morning, great is his faithfulness.

The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him.

It is well that a man should hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord.

Let him give his cheek to him that smiteth him:

Let him be filled full with reproach.

"For the Lord will not cast me off forever,

For though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies.

For he doth not afflict willingly, nor wilfully grieve the children of men.

"Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?"

Out of the mouth of the Most High proceedeth not evil and good?

Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord.

Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens.

Thou, O Lord, abideth forever, thy throne is from generation to generation.

Turn thou to us and we shall be turned.

Renew our days as of old."

Who loved Judah the more, Jeremiah or the war party?

NOTES FOR TEACHERS AND ADVANCED PUPILS.

We can show our patriotism in many different ways—sometimes by praising our country, sometimes by condemning it. Nor do we always prove our loyalty to our mother-country by urging it to engage in wars of conquest, or even to continue a hopeless fight in a justifiable cause. Not all who speak loudest of their patriotism love their land most. Occasionally it is but a cloak for evil; then patriotism becomes "the last refuge of a scoundrel."

Compare the fall of Jerusalem with that of Samaria.

The dirge with which this chapter closes forms one of the Bible books, and is called "Lamentations of Jeremiah."

The *Ninth of Ab* is a Fast-day that commemorates both the fall of Solomon's temple and of another built later. To prepare for the sad anniversary with due solemnity, strict Jews abstain from eating meat for *three weeks* previous, and impose further restrictions upon themselves during the *nine days* immediately preceding the Fast. The last meal on the eve of the Fast is eaten with ashes. When they reach the synagogue, which is but dimly lighted, they remove their shoes, and sitting on the floor with but candles to light their prayer-books, they chant in mournful strains lamentations for the loss of Jerusalem.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

LAST SCENES OF THE TRAGEDY.

BIBLE TEXT: "He that putteth his trust in me shall inherit my holy mountain. Thus saith the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity, I dwell in the high and holy place, but also with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble and to revive the heart of the contrite."

Isaiah lxvii. 13-15

The last chapter might have closed this history, but there are a few more incidents to tell. Judah was a long time in dying, and not till the death-throes were upon it did it resign itself to its fate. Although the best and most prominent people had been exiled to Babylonia after the first defeat in the reign of Jehoiakim, the best of those still left were now also transported to the same land, just as, you will remember, there were two transportations of the Northern Israelites by the Assyrians. So you can imagine what a sorry remnant remained. They were "the poor of the land left to be vine-dressers and husbandmen." The war, with its accompanying pestilence, had left ruin and desolation behind it. Cities had become depopulated, the farms and fields had become a wilderness, wild beasts roamed at will, while some of the homeless, desperate Judeans wandered the country as outlaws. Groups of the people fled in different directions to take refuge among neighboring peoples. A good

many clung to the old place, in spite of its miseries, out of their passionate love for it—a love that its desolation could not quench. The Hebrews have always maintained a romantic affection for their lost country that was higher than patriotism, for it became a part of their religion.

When Israel was overthrown by Assyria, it was left at once to its fate, and the conquered district was filled with strangers. But Nebuchadrezzar tried to save Judah to a better fate, by appointing one of their own number—not as king any more, of course, but as *governor*—over the remnant of the remnant, and by trying to restore law and order in the unhappy land. The appointment of GEDALIAH to this office was a fortunate choice. He was a Judean of noble family and of no less noble character. He was the very man who had saved Jeremiah when the fanatic princes had sought his life. Had he been made king in place of the unstable Zedekiah, the calamity might not have occurred. He was gentle, though firm, and when we have said that he had been a pupil of Jeremiah, we have said everything. He inspired such confidence that at his request the lawless bands that were ravaging the country after the war was over settled down to orderly life again. Gradually, under his wise guidance, a something of order grew out of the chaos. Some of those who had fled to the surrounding lands of Moab, Edom, and Ammon, seeing how quietly

and peacefully things were progressing, and how even some of the ruins were being restored under the new governor, stole back to the old home. Gedaliah made Mizpeh, in Benjamin, a sort of capital of the new government, for Jerusalem was in ruins. Of course, a Chaldean garrison was stationed there to prevent fresh insurrection.

Jeremiah, who had used all his influence to discourage the revolt, was, therefore, treated by the Babylonians with great respect. He was set at liberty, and offered the choice of living in Babylon at ease and comfort or staying in Judah. You know enough of Jeremiah now, I think, to be satisfied at once that he would cast in his lot with his unfortunate brethren rather than enjoy the patronage of Babylon. However bitterly he may have condemned their rebellion, still his people having rebelled, he would never desert them, but would share with them the troubles they had brought upon themselves against his warning counsels. So he and Gedaliah together tried to heal the old wounds. And he who had sternly denounced his people now tenderly consoled them, hopefully promising them that the good old times would come back again. Beyond the ruins of Jerusalem, he foresaw national restoration and religious triumph.

“Behold, I will gather them out of all countries, whither I have driven them in great wrath; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely:

And they shall be my people, and I will be their God; And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them. For thus saith the Lord: Like as I have brought all this great evil upon this people, so will I bring upon them all the good that I have promised them. Again there shall be heard in this place, which ye say shall be desolate without man and without beast, even in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem. The voice of joy, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the voice of them that shall say, Praise the Lord of Hosts; for the Lord is good; for his mercy endureth for ever. For I will cause to return the captivity of the land, as at the first, saith the Lord. Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel and to the house of Judah. In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely; and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The Lord is our Righteousness.

But there were malcontents left in the kingdom, who were not satisfied with the miseries Judah had already suffered, and had failed to learn prudence from experience. As though they envied their people the humble peace left them, they were not at rest until they had plunged them into trouble again, which would only result in more complete desolation to the hapless land. Perhaps the land had been too much upset and the people too much demoralized for all to settle down quietly again.

Gedaliah had been governor but two months, when Ishmael, a member of the dethroned royal

family, instigated by the Ammonites, determined on the mad design of winning back the crown to his family and freedom to his people by a bold stroke. Knowing that Gedaliah would not countenance such an insurrection, he decided to slay him. Gedaliah was warned, but he was too noble to believe such baseness. "Thou speakest falsely of Ishmael; touch him not." His faith was misplaced. The wise and peaceful governor was slain, together with his friends. The insurgents next overthrew the Chaldean garrison, and slaughtered seventy pilgrims in order to keep the matter secret. But the massacre leaked out, and the traitor was pursued by Johanan (the friend who had vainly warned Gedaliah) until he had only eight adherents left, with whom he fled to the Ammonites. But while his abortive attempt brought him no profit, it added to the misfortune of the Judean remnant.

Johanan and the few people about him knew not what to do. Nebuchadrezzar would never forgive this fresh revolt. Should they stay in the land or flee to Egypt? They asked the advice of Jeremiah. After a day of prayer, he advised them to stay in the land and to wait for better times, which God would surely bring—in which advice he was supported by his faithful friend Baruch. But, like so many people, they asked advice only to reject it. They decided to leave; so carrying him with them, they fled to Egypt with some of the remaining

Judeans. Here the patient man continued to inspire his exiled companions.

Aged and broken, his old fire was not gone. The idol temple of Egypt aroused his righteous anger, and he warningly declared its downfall.

When he died, Baruch took his precious teachings to Babylon, or "The Captivity," as it was called, where the large majority of the Judeans were now living, and in whom the future hope of Judah and its religion depended.

Nebuchadrezzar now transported a third division to Babylon, which act, we may say, almost completely depopulated the land of our fathers: it certainly closed its history for some years to come. "The holy cities had become a waste, Zion a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation."

Had Judah been overcome at the same time as Israel, its religion might have died without being revealed to the world. But surviving a hundred and fifty years more, during which time the religious consciousness of the people, fully ripened under the influence of Isaiah, Micah, and Jeremiah, we shall presently see that it was able to preserve its identity and its Faith even in exile, and to take up the thread of its national life again. So the first destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple did not complete the history of our people, but only an epoch of it.

Amos, Isaiah, and other prophets, too, had always said a *remnant* containing the righteous, the spirit-

ual. the winnowed few, would survive—the kernel of an ideal state, who would continue the destiny of the people and win for it greater glory. The fittest would survive. We will now follow their fortunes in another land:

“Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. I will put my law in their inward parts and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their God and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

“Thus saith the Lord, who giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, who divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar: The Lord of hosts is his name: If those ordinances depart from me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me forever.

Was Jeremiah's life a success or a failure?

NOTES FOR TEACHERS AND ADVANCED PUPILS.

Contrast Jeremiah with Josephus, who lived at the time of the fall of the Second Temple, A. C. E. 70. He also preached peace, but how different the motives! See Graetz's "History of the Jews," vol. ii.

The colony of Jews in Egypt became important in later days.

Read "A Prayer of Tobias" (Drayton), Reading and Recitations, J. P. S. A.



BY THE RIVERS OF BABYLON WE SAT AND WEPT.

BOOK IV.

EXILE AND RESTORATION.

CHAPTER XXIX.

BY THE RIVERS OF BABYLON.

BIBLE TEXT: "I will sift the house of Israel among all the nations like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall to the earth."

Amos, ix. 9.

We must now leave the land of our fathers and wend our way eastward to Babylonia, which is to be their home for fifty years. Turn to the map and follow the route taken by the captives of Judah. Crossing their own Jordan first and traversing the mountains of Hermon, they next dragged their weary way across that vast and terrible desert of Palmyra till they reached the Euphrates. It was no unusual sight in those days to see gangs of captives driven by the whip, their hands chained behind their backs. Cruelty was more usual than kindness. The eighty leagues journey from Jerusalem to Riblah took some months. At last, after much hardship and peril, they reached Babylonia.

You will remember that Nebuchadrezzar trans-

ported Judah to his dominions at three different times. First the young King Jehoiakin, with the chief families, in the year 597 B. C. E. These were brought to a Mesopotamian town on the banks of the Chebar, a river that empties into the Euphrates, not far from Carchemish (Circessium). The second transportation occurred eleven years after when Zedekiah was slain, Jerusalem taken and the Temple overthrown. The third took place the following year after Gedaliah had been basely murdered, though many escaped with Jeremiah to Egypt. Some of the exiles were taken to the capital itself—BABYLON.

Babylon—what a different city to their beloved Jerusalem. Zion, all Palestine in fact, was full of mountain ranges, melting into low hills or breaking off into steep abysses and shady valleys; all their poetry and song told of the mountains of Canaan. Babylon was built on a great plain. It was flat, straight and regular. Its streets ran at right angles, somewhat like our modern towns; and like some cities of to-day, too, were its tall buildings. The walls, running round it for nine miles, were very high and so broad that two chariots could comfortably pass each other on their top. What with a moat around the walls and a hundred gates of brass and iron it was well protected against an outside enemy. The buildings were not of stone, but brick; the material being supplied from the great plain (see Gen. xi. 3.)

Nebuchadrezzar did much of the making of this famous city, for he was one of the greatest builders ever known. He excavated a canal uniting the Euphrates and the Tigris, which were situated south of the city and lower down empty into the Persian Gulf. This helped to make Babylon a centre for many trade routes.

He built an artificial lake, which acted as a reservoir when the river was high. It was he, too, who built the new palace and the famous hanging gardens. He also added a new town to the old one, where many of the exiles were sent. Greatest of all Babylon's buildings was the temple of Bel, six hundred feet high, which gave its name to the place—gate of Bel. The uninterrupted expanse of sky made it a favorite spot for studying the stars; so there were many observatories.

Yet, unfamiliar though Babylon was to the exiles from Judah, their coming there was in one sense a coming home. For if you turn back in this history, you will learn that Abraham came from Ur, a city of Chaldea, that he had to cross the Euphrates before he could reach Canaan, and that this very *crossing* gave him, in fact, the name of *Hebrew*.

Nebuchadrezzar did not show himself an unkind master, though Judah had offered a stubborn resistance to his arms. He did not separate the different families and households, and they were permitted to retain their elders and judges. He may even have

given them lands in exchange for those taken away, on which they could build houses and plant vineyards. Such property as they could bring from Canaan, on asses and camels, they were allowed to keep. Only a small number were made slaves; some of the children of the nobles were made servants in the court, which were really posts of honor (see Daniel i). There were opportunities for earning money and even of becoming prosperous. They could build, plant and engage in commerce. It is not quite fair, then, to call it "The Captivity." Only the leaders of the revolt in Judah were imprisoned. So while they had to pay heavy tribute and render certain service, some measure of independence was given them.

They soon learnt the language of their conquerors, Aramaic. It was not unlike their own Hebrew. They learnt many things from the Chaldeans besides a new language. For, being great astronomers, the Jews acquired something of this science from them, and learnt to rearrange their calendar, beginning their year in the autumn and giving new names to their months.

However comfortable many may have learnt to make themselves—it was not home. They looked across the dreary plain with a heart yearning toward the unseen hills of Judah. They were made to feel they were foreigners. From choice or necessity they kept much to themselves. Sorrow strengthened the

sympathy of kinship. When it came to religion there was some persecution, especially later on. No doubt, there was many a taunt. The one hundred and thirty-seventh Psalm gives a vivid picture of their condition:

"By the rivers of Babylon we sat,
And we wept when we remembered Zion.
Upon the willows in the midst thereof,
We hanged up our harps.
For there they, that led us captive, required of us songs,
And they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying:
Sing us one of the songs of Zion.
How shall we sing the Lord's song
In a strange land?
If I forget thee, O Jerusalem,
Let my right hand forget its skill,
Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth,
If I remember thee not,
If I prefer not Jerusalem
Above my chief joy."

Yes, their king was gone, their land, their royalty, their power. No need to think of conquests now or border wars. There was leisure to think of themselves—their past, their destiny. "In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity, consider."

The past that was lost seemed now doubly precious. They desired to recall it as far as possible. So they began to write up many of their annals and to record and recall the teachings and saying of their great men. In this way the exile became a literary

period ; some Bible books were here compiled. Great works have often been composed in prison and in tribulation.

But that which held the exiles together as one people, which gave them greatest comfort in this strange land, and which fed their hopes for the future was—their religion.

With every other people the fall of the nation meant the fall of its divinity. They would accept the gods of their conquerors as matter of course. For religion was not a separate institution, but part of the government itself. Patriotism could not be separated from piety, and loyalty to the god of the land was involved in loyalty to the king. The Hebrews alone, for the first time in the world's history, kept their faith in the God of Israel, after the land of Israel was taken from them. This showed that the Eternal they worshiped was not confined to one land, but was the God over all lands. It proved, too, the greatness of the Hebrew people who could conceive such a glorious idea of God. This great truth was to save them as a distinct people down to this very day. While the Israelites of the North, for the most part, were lost among their Assyrian neighbors, only because their conception of divinity was still uncertain and had not yet ripened into truth.

Again the exile of Judah was gradual and gave them time to adapt themselves to their new home and their new conditions. And then they had with

them some of their wisest teachers and their noblest men, so that preaching, prophecy and moral instruction were kept up, feeding the spiritual life of the banished people. Indeed, away from the pomp of royalty, from political ambitions and the hope of national greatness, their religion even entered a higher and purer phase, so that now for the first time, not only the few but the masses grasped its spirit, and realized the unseen universal Father. Without that religious bond the remnant of Judah would soon have been lost among the countless Babylonians.

To what extent did Judah owe its salvation to its fall?

NOTES FOR TEACHERS AND ADVANCED PUPILS.

Adversity now became Israel's best educator. What says Shakespeare?

Compare the Puritans of England with Israel at the close of the exile.

Bel, a title, corresponds to Baal, meaning lord; but Herodach was its name.

That Israel may have met with some persecution in Babylon, especially after Nebuchadrezzar's death, we infer from chance texts in the Prophets—Isaiah xlii. 22; xlvii. 6; li. 23, and liii.

Psalms xlii. and xliii., which are really one, present a pathetic longing of some son of the exile for his native land and its temple. If this situation be remembered it will be read with new understanding.

Read from "Readings and Recitations," J. P. S. A.:

"O weep for those."—Byron.

"The Jewish Captive."—E. O. Smith.

"The Captivity."—Charles Reade.

"By the Rivers of Babylon."—Byron.

CHAPTER XXX.

EZEKIEL: "THE SOUL THAT SINNETH, IT SHALL DIE."

BIBLE TEXT: "The nations shall know that I am the Lord that sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore."

Ezekiel xxxvii. 28.

Now, you must not suppose that Judah submitted to the loss of land and freedom without asking themselves what it all meant. Why were they so punished? A few wavering souls dazzled by the grandeur of the temple of Bel and the magnificence and might of the Babylonians felt that the right god must be on the side of numbers and of power, and were tempted to Babylonian idolatry. But in spite of the imposing splendor of their heathen festivals (see Daniel iii.) the mass was not led astray. On the contrary, adversity at last brought home to their convictions and hearts the lessons the prophets had tried to teach in happier days. Idolatry was dead for ever for the large majority. How marvelous are the ways of God. The very conditions that we might at first suppose would shake the belief in Him, deepened it. A century later and the sight of an idol filled them with horror; the idea of one spiritual God became to them the most essential truth of the universe.

The man who did most to help them to explain the present misfortunes without losing their faith in

God's justice and mercy was the prophet EZEKIEL. At great crises in Israel's history a prophet had always been at hand to explain its meaning in the light of God's providence. Nor was one wanting now.

Ezekiel had come to Babylon with the first transportation, with King Jehoiachin, in 597. He was born in the year 620 and had been a priest in Jerusalem. Indeed, we find the priestly tendency all through his prophecies. He became the teacher and religious authority to his fellow exiles on the banks of the Chebar. Still, he was settled there for five years before he felt the divine call:

"Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel. Therefore, hear the word of my mouth and give them warnings from me. If not, their blood shall I require from thee. But if thou warn the wicked, though he turn not from his wickedness, thou hast delivered thy soul. When I bring a sword, the watchman, when he seeth it, must blow the trumpet and warn the people."

So Ezekiel felt it his duty to preach to his people, to explain to them, as best he could, the reason of their present condition, and to assure them that if they reformed their ways, salvation would yet be theirs. For there were some indifferent and idolatrous still. With his burning words he must scourge them into better life. So he denounces such sins as he finds among the exiles with all the severity of the earlier prophets. But there is a hopeful note, too.

"I will sprinkle clean water upon you and you shall be clean, from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you and a new spirit will I put within you. I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes."

But he felt that the people were not entirely to blame but their leaders :

"Woe to the shepherds of Israel that did feed themselves. Ye drank the milk, ye clothed you with the wool; but ye fed not the sheep. The diseased ye did not strengthen, the lost ye did not seek. With force did ye rule them. They became scattered. Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of the Lord. Behold I am against the shepherds and will require my sheep at their hand. I, even I, will search for my sheep. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day of the thunderstorm, so will I seek out my sheep. I will deliver them from the places whither they have been scattered in the day of cloud and darkness. I will bring them to their own land and feed them upon the mountain of Israel."

But not all were sinners. Some conscientiously tried to do the right, and yet despaired. They supposed, according to the old belief, that they were now suffering for the sins of their fathers, and that that burden they could never throw off. "Their fathers had eaten sour grapes and their teeth were set on edge." His logical argument against that theory was perhaps the most important lesson taught by Ezekiel :

"As I live, saith the Lord, ye shall not use any more this proverb in Israel. All souls are mine. If one be just and wrongeth not any, he shall surely live. But if his

son walketh not in the ways of his righteous father, he shall surely die.

But if this bad man beget a son, that seeth all his father's sins and doeth not such like, but giveth his bread to the hungry and keepeth his hand from iniquity, he shall not die for the sin of his father.

The son shall not bear the sin of the father, nor shall the father bear the sin of the son. The soul that sinneth it shall die."

This is what is called the *responsibility of the individual*. God would not make all Israel answerable for the sins of some. Though it is also true in life that the wickedness of a few may often bring calamity upon many innocent persons. But that calamity is *not a punishment from God*, only an unfortunate consequence of evil.

This lesson brought great comfort and hope to the exiles. They were not suffering now under God's displeasure. His grace was ever open to them. It was never too late to repent. Even in the humiliation of their exile, God had not forgotten them. In his own good time He would restore them once more to their own land and would raise up for them a king from the house of David—God's own anointed—a Messiah.

"As I live, saith the Lord God, I will gather you from the countries wherein you are scattered. I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples and there I will plead with you face to face, like as I pleaded with your fathers. I will purge out from among you the rebels and them that transgress against me. For in my holy mountain shall all

the house of Israel serve me in the land. I will be sanctified in you in the sight of the nations. Ye shall know that I am the Lord when I bring you into the land of Israel, into the country which I lifted up mine hand to give unto your fathers.

What wonderful faith these prophets had! In the face of all this Babylonian might and far extended sway, he doubted not that Israel would be rescued from their hand. Do you remember Jeremiah's firm conviction of this same outcome, under circumstances much more unpromising?

Ezekiel further brings home to them his assurance of their restoration, through a strange vision. He saw a valley of dry bones. Could these dead bones live again? Yes. The flesh came upon them, God's spirit breathed into them and they lived.

"These bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, our bones are dried up, our hope is lost. I will open your graves, O my people, and bring you to the land of Israel. I will put my spirit in you and you shall live. And ye shall know that I the Lord have spoken it and performed it.

So convinced is Ezekiel of Israel's return that he even enters into details of preparation for their future. He plans a new Jerusalem and a new temple. Though familiar with the old, he makes many new departures. He gives more attention than we would expect to the sacrifices, priestly duties and Levitical distinctions in the new temple. Here and there we miss the prophetic fire; he is coldly precise in laying down his special laws. But we must not forget that

he had been a priest and shows the priest's fondness for these things. Unlike the great prophets, he was not prepared to condemn animal sacrifices as a form of worship. But his new Jerusalem is a noble conception. No longer two rival nations, Israel and Judah, but one kingdom, all united by brotherly love. It is an ideal land, where no crime will be committed, where none will suffer want and where everlasting peace will reign. A heavenly kingdom, indeed, and its name is to be "Here is God." No such kingdom has ever yet been realized, but surely the picturing of such glorious times by the prophets of old, gives to all nations noble models and helps them in some little way to pattern their states after them.

Israel's religion then and the expectation to return one day to their own kingdom kept the exiles together and saved them from being absorbed by the Babylonians—though it made life harder for them in some ways. Slowly the last embers of idolatry died out.

In the early years of the exile, Ezekiel had been very unpopular, especially when he discouraged the hopes that Judah would yet be victorious against Babylon. But when the news was brought that Jerusalem had fallen, they looked up to him with new respect and earnestly listened to his teachings. So gradually Ezekiel came to be the great authority in the exile. His house was the rallying place where

all earnest Israelites would gather. The SABBATH was the day usually chosen and soon it grew to be religion's day. Similar religious meetings were held in every Jewish quarter. Since they could not offer sacrifices outside of Jerusalem, these assemblies or SYNAGOGUES became houses of prayer and centres of the religious life of the exile. In prayer they turned lovingly towards Jerusalem, the place where the Temple once stood ; this custom afterwards grew into a law, as customs do. Soon special days came to be recognized to keep alive the sad but sacred past and to mark the different steps of the great tragedy of the loss of Judah. So there was instituted the Fast of the 10th month (10th of Tebeth)—the siege of Jerusalem ; the Fast of the 4th month (17th of Tammuz)—the conquest of the land ; the Fast of the 5th month (9th of Ab —the destruction of Jerusalem ; the Fast of the 7th month (3d of Tishree)—the assassination of Gedaliah. These voluntary seasons of mourning showed the state of mind of the people—humble contrition and spiritual awakening. No doubt, many of the Psalms of penitence were written at this time.

We have already said that histories of some of the last reigns were written at this time, by many of those who witnessed them and who took part in the closing struggle. Doubtless all the sacred writings, the messages of the prophets were now for the first time eagerly and earnestly studied by the people

whom adversity had changed so much for the better, whom sorrow had purified. In this way the prophets preached more powerfully after their death than during their life. Many old religious lessons were now revived—the sanctity of home, the vital importance of moral life, the beauty of holiness.

Surely this loss of land, this captivity and exile were but blessings in disguise. So often does God turn our sorrows into opportunities for larger good. Here in the exile the religious education of the Jews, in its fullest sense, begins.

Why were the Jews more religious in the exile than in their own land?

NOTES FOR TEACHERS AND ADVANCED PUPILS.

When the call of God came to Ezekiel his imagination pictured a flaming chariot, on each of the four sides of which, was a strange beast. Though more complex than Isaiah's vision, it certainly was not as impressive. In many ways Ezekiel shows a decline from the great prophets. This "chariot" of his vision has given food to much speculation and has led the way to *mysticism*. All we need say of mysticism here is that it rested on the supposition that God is revealed through strange, weird and fanciful means. So it is very close to superstition. But it has played a great part in all religions, not excluding our own. Read Cabala, Graetz's History of Jews.

"Children shall not die for the sins of their fathers." Children inherit much from their parents, both good and bad and in this way suffer from some of their failings and get the benefit of their virtues. This deepens parental responsibility and links us all in closer union.

"The soul that sinneth shall die." Explain here the symbolic

and moral uses of "live and die." "See I have set before thee this day life and good, death and evil." Deut. xxx. 19—"Teach me how to live."

Ezekiel is ever defending the honor of God and justifying His ways to man.

Like Amos and Jeremiah he does not confine his attention to Israel, but dwells on the fate of surrounding nations—Ammon, Tyre, Egypt, etc. See chapters xxv.-xxxii.

The faith of Ezekiel in planning out all the service of a temple not yet built and the government of a land not yet restored, was seen again in the Rabbis after the second overthrow, who drew up precise instructions for the priests—when Jerusalem should be theirs again—a hope, alas, that was never realized.

Gather all instances of ideal lands—such as Plato's Republic, the Eutopia (good land) of Sir Thomas Moore, and the Golden Age of Isaiah, and compare them with Ezekiel's New Jerusalem.

Not all that we find in the book of Ezekiel was preached to the people; not all of it even was read. Perhaps it was the least read of the prophets. His last writing dates about 570.

The nations could not understand how Israel could continue to worship a divinity who was defeated, they supposed, in the defeat of Israel. To-day the world could hardly understand the point of view of these nations. How "knowledge grows from more to more."

Compare Ezekiel's temple with Solomon's. Ezek. xl.-xliii.; 1 Kings vi., vii.

" Ezekiel's laws and priestly ceremonial with those of the Pentateuch. Ezek. xliv.-xlvii.

" Ezekiel's Division of Palestine among the tribes with that of Joshua. Ezek. xlviii. and volume ii., chap. vi.

The "Valley of dry bones" is also supposed by some to present metaphorically the resurrection of the dead.

Read "Ezekiel," Whittier, Readings and Recitations, J. P. S. A.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE SECOND ISAIAH—ISRAEL, THE SUFFERING
SERVANT.

BIBLE TEXT: "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth.
but the word of our God shall stand forever."

Isaiah xl. 8.

While these precious seeds of faith and duty were ripening in the hearts of the purified Israel, important events were taking place around them. As long as Nebuchadrezzar lived, Babylon's power was great and its sway extended from the Tigris to the Mediterranean. But after his death, in 562, it began to decline. for weaker hands now held the reins. His son and successor, Evil-Merodach, had nothing of his father's aggressive strength or ambition. He was not unkind, judging from his releasing Judah's last king, Jehoiachin, from prison after a captivity of nigh forty years, and he may have been equally kind to the rest of the exiles. But it needed a strong hand, indeed, to hold that great empire together. He was soon murdered by his brother-in-law, Neriglissor, whom the Jews found a cruel master. In 556 the throne was seized by Nabonnedos. He treated Israel badly and imposed heavy labor upon them.

The fifty-third chapter of Isaiah and Psalm cii. may reflect his persecutions, due perhaps to **their refusal** to abjure their religion and their nation.

Let us turn our eyes in another direction, to Persia. In the year 558 CYRUS ascended the throne. He soon showed his remarkable power. He was destined to be a great conqueror, perhaps as great an organizer of empire as Charlemagne. In 549 he became master of Media, though before his time Persia was the inferior nation of the two and subject to Media. The power of Cyrus, King of the Medes and Persians, now grew so fast, that in alarm Babylon assisted by Egypt, Lydia and Sparta formed an alliance against him in 547. One by one he overcame each of these enemies. In Lydia he defeated its King Cræsus, famous for his riches. Babylon's turn had come.

In 538 Cyrus was before its walls. So badly were its inhabitants now ruled that they welcomed his approach; he boldly marched in without resistance. Herodotus, however, says he entered by strategy; as it was useless to attack those solid walls, he deepened the canal and partly dammed up the river so that his soldier could cross it and climb the walls. Its fate was sealed. The King's son, Belshazzar, and his court were completely taken by surprise. They did not strike a blow. She that had brought others low was now herself overthrown. Babylon had swallowed up Assyria. Persia now absorbs Babylon.

To learn the feelings of our ancestors when their arch enemy fell at last we must turn to the prophets. Here are some extracts.

“How hath the oppressor ceased!

The Lord hath broken the staff of the wicked, the sceptre or the rulers.

That smote peoples in wrath and ruled nations in anger with a persecution that none restrained.

Now the whole earth is at rest and is quiet; they break forth into singing.

How art thou fallen from heaven,

O day star, son of the morning!

How art thou cut down to the ground,

Who didst lay low the nations!

Thou saidst in thine heart I will ascend into heaven,

I will exalt my throne above the stars of God;

Yet art thou brought down to the grave, to the uttermost depths of the pit.

Is this the power that did make the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms,

That made the world a wilderness and overthrew its cities?

The Lord will have compassion on Jacob and will yet choose Israel and set them in their own land. And the stranger shall join himself with them. In that day the Lord shall give thee rest from thy sorrow and from thy trouble and from thy hard service.”

Before Babylon had fallen, the discerning eye of a great prophet saw that the conquering Cyrus in his westward march would certainly lay it low. Immediately he considers the consequences for Israel. It is the fulfilment of their destiny and the triumph of the true faith in the living God. His prophecies will be found in the book of Isaiah from the fortieth chapter; for the writings of more than one author were often included in one book. We do not know

his name ; he is called the SECOND ISAIAH, or Isaiah of Babylon, or simply the Unknown.

With the confidence of nearness and certainty does he voice the hope of the restoration of Canaan. He seizes the occasion to strengthen the faith of his people in the providence of God.

Like the prophets before him, he too sees the hand of God in these great events occurring in the world about him, in the fall of Babylon and the rise of Persia ; he sees what we would call to-day *providence in history*. God is behind it all and directing all for the wisest purposes. Cyrus, therefore, is His messenger, though he know it not. The prophet is bold enough to call him a *Messiah*, *i. e.*, God's anointed king. Think of the breadth of view of this prophet who recognizes God's messiah even in a Gentile. This was remarkable, indeed, for those ancient days, when people found it so hard to recognize good outside their own. These are his words :

“ Thus saith the Lord to his anointed to Cyrus,—whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him,—I will go before thee and make the rugged places plain. I will give thee the hidden riches of secret places that thou mayest know that I am the Lord, who calleth thee by thy name, even the God of Israel. For Jacob, my servant's sake and Israel my chosen, I have called thee, though thou hast not known me.”

His opening message is one of comfort and of hope to Israel. While the burden of earlier prophecies was condemnation, his was encouragement and

promise. There is a tone of joy, of enthusiasm and inspiring hope in all his words:

“Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith your God. Speak comfortingly to Jerusalem and say, her iniquity is pardoned, for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins.

O thou that bringest good tidings to Zion, get thee up on a high mountain, lift up thy voice, be not afraid, say unto Judah behold your God.”

But the prophet makes Israel's expected restoration the opportunity for deepening their faith in the Eternal. The famous fortieth chapter contains a magnificent picture of God's eternal power. “He who measures the waters in the hollow of his hands and weighs the mountains in a balance.” Compared with him “nations are but a drop in the bucket.” All the beasts of Lebanon “would not be sufficient for his burnt offering. None can compare with God.”

Then, as a fine contrast, he draws a picture of an idol, the work of man's hand. He cutteth down a tree and useth half for a fire to cook his food and the other half he fashioneth as an idol and prayeth to it and saith: “Deliver me, for thou art my God.” They have eyes, but cannot see, heads, but cannot understand, they feed on ashes! God! Have ye not known. He stretcheth out the great heavens; people compared with him are as grasshoppers. Look up at the sky and see the countless stars. He made them all by the greatness of his might. Do

you, O Jacob, then think that God has forgotten your cause? He never forgets. He never is tired. He giveth strength to others. Faith in Him alone will make you stronger than the strongest.

What was the religion of the Persians? Was it idolatry? No. Though the masses were perhaps idolators and even the kings. But the Persian belief, as accepted by the best, was the purest religion that Israel had yet met in any of the nations around it. This would in itself strengthen the kinship between Israel and the Persians. They believed in a Spirit of Light and Good, whom they called Ormuzd. But they believed also in a second being—a Spirit of Darkness and Evil, whom they called Ahriman. They supposed that these two beings were constantly fighting against each other, but that in the end Ormuzd would prevail. To believe in *two* beings is called *dualism*, from duo—two. Now the Israelites were monotheists, believers in *one* God. Fearing that this faith by its very nearness to their own might lead his people astray, Isaiah reminded them again that the Eternal was *sole* God, whose power was not shared with any other being:

“Know that from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof, there is no God beside Me. I am the Eternal, there is none else. I form the light and create the darkness. I make peace and create evil. I the Lord do all these things.”

There is, then, no separate being of darkness and evil.

More than any other teacher before him does he preach the welfare of *mankind*. God must be recognized by all:

"Let not the stranger that hath joined himself to the Lord say, the Lord hath separated me from his people. The strangers that join themselves to the Lord to minister unto him, to love his name and to be his servants—they will I bring to my holy mountain and make joyful in My house of prayer. For My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples."

Indeed, one of the purposes of Israel's selection is to bring the truth of God to all the world. He is not the favorite of God in preference to other peoples, but the SERVANT of God for the sake of other peoples. This is the most important lesson taught by the Second Isaiah.

"It is too light a thing that thou shouldst only restore the preserved of Israel, I shall also make thee a light to the heathen that thou mayst bring my salvation to the end of the earth.

Behold my servant whom I uphold, I have put my spirit upon him; he shall bring God's law to the Gentiles. He shall not fail nor be discouraged until he hath set judgment in earth and distant shores shall wait for his law. I the Lord have called thee in righteousness and will give thee as a light for the Gentiles, to open the blind eyes and to bring out of the prison house those who sit in darkness."

For ignorance is darkness and to be in error is to be enchained. God's truth is both freedom and light. This then was Israel's mission. They were to be "the witnesses of God" and to teach the world that

"He only is the Lord and beside Him there is no savior."

When the prophet speaks of the Servant he does not mean *all* Israel, for many of them still wanted teaching themselves, but the *best* of Israel. Though he hoped that one day they all would be worthy to teach God and duty to the heathen. Yet, there was one great problem that troubled them still. Why had they suffered so much; why did they suffer still? If they alone worshiped the true God, should not their lot be better than that of the Gentiles? But it was worse. They had lost their power, their freedom, their land. And even should they be permitted to return to Canaan they could only expect to be vassals. Was God just to them; did He love them; had He forgotten them? Love them! The prophet assures them that "the mountains might depart and the hills be removed, but His kindness should never depart from them;" "sooner would a mother forget her darling child than God forget His people." There was purpose in their suffering. What was it?

Their suffering was one of the consequences of being God's servants to man. Great missions bring their difficulties and their responsibilities. The higher the work, the harder to fulfil it. They must consider this mission greater honor than power or wealth. If others persecute them for their fidelity, they must not falter or complain, They must be brave and loyal and steadfast. Indeed, their adher-

ence to God and His law under all persecution will be one of the very best means of teaching God and His law. How? People will gradually come to think that a Faith that can be maintained under such privations, danger and woe must be a Faith noble and comforting—must be the truth. This remarkable lesson in which Israel is depicted as the suffering servant of God, is brought out in the famous fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. Here are some quotations from it:

“ He (Israel) was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; he was as one from whom men hide their faces; we esteemed him not. He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrow, while we thought him stricken and afflicted of God. But he was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement that brought us peace was laid on him; by his stripes were we healed.

He shall still live on in his posterity and through him shall God's good pleasure be accomplished. By the suffering of his soul shall he feed many. By his knowledge of God shall my servant make many righteous.”

Long after Isaiah has passed away did Israel more than ever continue to be “despised and rejected of men”—Greeks, Syrians, Romans and others. Although he taught the world God, the Ten Commandments, the moral law, through His sacred Scriptures, containing the lessons of life, yet was he often persecuted by the very people to whom he brought the blessed truth and uncomplainingly

suffered martyrdom in every land. But slowly the truths taught by his Bible and his life are dawning in the hearts of men. We must continue to be loyal to the Faith of our fathers, no matter what disadvantages that fidelity may involve. In this way will we be partly fulfilling the mission for which we stand distinct in the world.

Does suffering always purify?

NOTES FOR TEACHERS AND ADVANCED PUPILS.

Cyrus appeared at one of the turning points in the world's history. See the condition of civilization in other lands (Stanley's "Jewish Church," iii. p. 52; Geikie's "Hours with the Bible," vi. 385.)

Cyrus' Empire reached from the Himalaya Mountains to the Ægean Sea. He fairly earned the titles of Just and Gentle.

Cyrus did not destroy the city of Babylon, he even restored its gods; but a later king, Darius, partly overthrew its walls; the next king, Xerxes, destroyed the Temple of Bel. Very much later still it went to total ruin and by the time the Romans came East it was a desert!

Several centuries later (about 200 A. C. E.) Babylonia became the centre of rabbinical learning. Much of what the Babylonian Talmud contains were the teachings of the schools of Sora, Pumbeditha and Nehardea.

There is a symbolic truth in the dualism of the Persians—all life seems a struggle between good and evil.

Notice the different theories of human suffering presented in the Bible: 1) God's punishment for sin in which the community had often to suffer for the individual and future generations for their ancestors; 2) The theory of Ezekiel is still, punishment for sin, but only imposed upon the individual sinner; 3) The theory

of the Second Isaiah—that at times suffering may be a mark not of God's disfavor, but rather is involved in the noblest duties of life; that it chastens the sufferer, while impressing and at last winning the witness of it; 4) Lastly, the conclusion presented in the book of Job. Suffering cannot always be a punishment from God, for at times the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper. Therefore, we do not know the purpose of suffering—"the ways of God are past our finding out."

On the helpful influence of martyrdom look back to page 160.

The frequent mention of the Gentile to whom God's law is to be brought and of the heathen who are "joining themselves to the Lord," makes it probable that already Israel was active in bringing proselytes into the fold. This reacted on Israel and strengthened their own convictions in Judaism. In later days the proselytes became very zealous in the fulfillment of every duty.

Read: "Vision of Belshazzar," Byron.

" "Belshazzar," Proctor.

Readings and Recitations," J. P. S. A.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE RESTORATION.

BIBLE TEXT: "I will turn again your captivity and gather you from all the nations and from all the places whither I have driven you."

Jeremiah xxix. 14.

We are now to witness a remarkable incident in history—a people torn up from their native home and taken to a distant land, returning after half a century to take up their national life again, the tie binding them together wholly unbroken.

For the hopes of Israel and their prophets were fulfilled. Cyrus issued a decree permitting those who wished to return to Canaan :

“ Whosoever there is among you of all people—his God be with him—let him go up to Jerusalem and build the House of the Lord God of Israel.”

Why did he show this kindness to Judah? Palestine was now one of his possessions, just as much of Babylon or even Persia. It was, therefore, certainly wise to let those who wished live in a land they loved, and thus make them his grateful subjects. Again the land of Israel, the Persian Empire's extreme eastern boundary, was on the borders of Egypt, and they might help to keep off that enemy.

But let us not look for selfish reasons only. Cyrus was evidently a man both liberal and kind, desirous of relieving the oppressed.

Nor did he do good by halves. All the sacred vessels of the First Temple that Nebuchadrezzar had put in the House of the idol Bel were now offered by the generous king towards the new temple that he was encouraging the Jews to build on their return. There were bowls, knives, tankards, and platters in gold and silver, numbering many thousands.

The prophets took up the royal proclamation, and bade the people embrace this opportunity of returning to the land of their fathers.

Listen to the joyful words of Isaiah:

"The Lord hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, to proclaim the year of the Lord's good pleasure, to comfort all that mourn, to give them a garland for ashes, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.

"They shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations. Ye shall be named the priests of the Lord, men shall call you the ministers of our God.

"Their seed shall be known among the nations and their offspring among the peoples. All that see them shall acknowledge that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed."

You must read for yourselves the beautiful Psalm cxxvi., written for this occasion, in which occurs the famous verse;

"Those that sow in tears shall reap in joy."

Did all avail themselves of this permission to return? Did even the majority? No! Nor was it to be expected. If they stayed in Babylon, they would remain under the same tolerant government of Cyrus. Fifty years had passed since, "sitting by the rivers of Babylon, they wept when they remembered Zion." Indeed, a new generation was living there now, born in Babylonia. Here they had settled homes and settled occupations. They had never seen the home of their fathers, and had, perhaps, a natural attachment to the land of their birth.

Nor need we suppose that staying in Babylon implied less zeal for their ancestral faith. They could worship God here and fulfil His law. We shall see later, indeed, a keener religious life in those who stayed at home than in those who returned.

But there were many who rose joyfully to the call, prepared to take the long journey, regardless of its hardships and its dangers. Others may have been especially chosen to go. Even some of the heathens who had been won over as proselytes to their faith joined them, reminding us of the "mixed numbers" that went up from Egypt. Altogether, some forty-two thousand responded to the call, including priests, several thousand Levites, singers, porters, Temple servants, with horses, mules, camels and asses. Those who did not go "strengthened the hands" of those that did, with golden darics and silver pounds, with vessels, beasts, and precious things.

The arrangements for departure took almost a year. It is not easy to break up homes and start life again in a new land. The pilgrims were under the general direction of a Persian commissary, but under the immediate leadership of ZERUBBABEL (*i. e.*, born in Babylon), a grandson of Jehoiachin, of the royal house of Judah. JOSHUA, the priest, was the religious head of the party. Zerubbabel was to be the future governor of Judea, styled Sheshbazar,

also written Tirshatha (*i. e.*, "Illustrious"). But later the priest became more important than the prince.

Picture some of the Puritans leaving the villages of England for America's shores—the cheers, the sad partings, the tears, and we may form an idea of the touching scenes at the leave-taking of the exiles. The supplies are all ready at last, their tents and household stuff are laden on the camels. The priests bearing the precious Temple vessels are in the centre. The party moves on. The singing men and women chant the songs of Zion. A thousand mounted Persian soldiers accompany the party, to protect them on the way and to help them get possession of the land.

Ah, they had not the means of travel at our disposal. It meant then a journey of many months' tramp to traverse the 600 miles from Babylon to Palestine. Not many had the luxury of camels, but must needs walk. A hard gravel plain, on which hardly any water could be found, led from the banks of the Euphrates to the extreme north of Syria, with nothing but bands of robbers to break the monotony. The first mountains they saw were the heights of Hermon, then the varied hill and dale of Israel's native land. They had started in the spring of the year 536, but it was the autumn before they reached their destination.

The sight of the old home at last was not an

inspiring one. The realization fell short of the prophetic pictures. You will remember that few, and those of the humblest, had been left to till the soil of Canaan, when Nebuchadrezzar had taken the majority to Babylonia. These probably came forward to greet their brethren gladly enough. What had they been doing for the last fifty years? What had been their religious condition? The records are silent.

The emigrants were not given the whole of Palestine, but only a central strip that from now on we will call *Judæa*, though at present it was much smaller than the old kingdom of Judah. On their north, in the late kingdom of the Ten Tribes, were the Samaritans; on their south, Edom; on the west were still the Philistines.

Even so, there were not yet enough emigrants to settle this narrow strip of territory, although some Israelites may have joined them from other lands. From depopulation and long neglect, much of the land lay in desolation, and wild beasts prowled among the ruins and jungle. The surrounding people, Israel's enemies of old, did not look upon the returning exiles with favor. The Edomites, who had been squatting on Judah, had now grudgingly to give it up, though a large part they kept till conquered by the Jews many years later. As far as they could, the exiles sought their old family estates.

To their honor be it said that before they were settled in comfortable homes, they thought of their religious obligations, and at once set to work to arrange some religious organization. An altar was built on the site of the old altar at Jerusalem on the mount where Solomon's temple had raised its head so proudly years before. As it was now the Fall, they at once celebrated the Festival of Ingathering. This altar was used for the daily sacrifices, which were now re-instituted; for Israel was not yet prepared to give them up; indeed, they remained the central feature of worship for many years. This altar was only a temporary arrangement while they were making ready to rebuild the Temple.

Was it the duty of all the Jews in Babylon to return to Palestine?

NOTES FOR TEACHERS AND ADVANCED PUPILS.

Since the exiles were mostly of the surviving tribe of Judah, from now on they are called *Yehudim*—Jews.

Notice that priests and Levites are mentioned separately; the priests were descendants of the priests of Jerusalem, said to be descended from Zadok. Ezekiel made them the priestly aristocracy.

Notice, too, that "singers" formed a sufficiently important body to be mentioned as a separate class.

A golden daric was about \$5.70, a silver pound about nine cents.

The fact that the continuance of Judaism was so bound up with the hope of the Restoration tends to show that Israel had not quite learned to look upon their religion as distinct from their nation. It was not a something that, in their conception, could yet stand

alone. They learned that later, so that the nation never again reached its old importance for them. Gradually they ceased to be a nation, and became a religious community.

Nethinim are mentioned among the returning exiles; these were Temple slaves or their descendants. The singers and musicians were among them. For in days when slaves formed so large a class of people, their occupations were not all menial, many being mechanics, scribes, librarians, physicians.

Contrast the exodus from Egypt with that from Babylon. Starting from opposite directions, both journeys had the same destination.

Read "But who shall see?" (Th. Moore), Readings and Recitations, J. P. S. A.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

HAGGAI AND ZECHARIAH—THE SECOND TEMPLE.

BIBLE TEXT: "Not by might, not by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts." *Zechariah, iv. 6.*

The preparations for rebuilding the new Temple flagged. For men and women must live; they were, for the most part, poor, many being miserably clad; and to crown all, the land was visited by famine. In these words Haggai, of whom we are about to speak, describes the times:

"Ye have sown much and bring in little; ye clothe you, but there is none warm: wages are put into a bag of holes: ye looked for much, but lo, it came to little."

Unfriendly neighbors made these hard conditions of life still harder. For their benefactor, Cyrus,

had died in the year 529. With his death the passing of a great man was felt. Troubles and intrigues began, and Israel soon realized the difference under the next king—Cambyses. They had to bear their proportion of the levies for his Egyptian campaign.

He was succeeded by Darius in 520, the year of the famine. This king helped to restore something of order and confidence again. He was not so successful abroad, for his army was defeated by the Athenians at the famous battle of Marathon.

It was not till a prophet at last came forward and urged upon Israel the duty of rebuilding the Temple, and thereby taking up the duties that grew out of it, that at last the good work was begun. His name was HAGGAI. He was an old man now, and may have even seen the first Temple fall. We may be sure that he comforted and helped his people now in many ways, having suffered with them in all their reverses:

“How can you bear to dwell in houses of timber when the house of God lies in ruins?”

The reproach struck home. They set to work. The laying of the foundation-stone was a joyful ceremony. The trumpets were blown and the cymbals were sounded:

“They sang one to another in praise and thanks, saying, ‘Give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth forever.’ And all the people shouted with a great shout because the foundation of the House was laid. But many of the old men that had seen the [grandeur of

the] first House wept with a loud voice, so that they could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people."

But Haggai tried to keep up their courage:

"Be strong, Zerubbabel and Joshua, and all ye people of the land, saith the Lord, and work, for my spirit abideth with you. The latter glory of this House shall be greater than the former."

It has already been stated that the Northern Kingdom of Israel had been largely repopulated by a people from a province called Cuthea; these came to be named SAMARITANS, after the old capital, Samaria. From an Israelite priest at Bethel and from the humble remnant left in the land, they learned something of Israel's religion. Though receiving little of the spirit that the prophets had breathed into it, they clung to this new faith, such as it was.

When the exiles began rebuilding the Temple, some Samaritan chiefs wished to take part in it and to be received in the Jewish community. It was a great temptation to get so many helpers. But regarding the Samaritans as little better than heathens, they feared that mingling with them might revive some of the old idolatries, which it had cost Israel so much time and suffering to uproot. They therefore declined this proffered help, and made enemies of the Samaritans forever after.

Were the Israelites justified in their refusal?

It is very hard to say. Should they not rather have tried to teach them their Faith as they better understood it? Surely the Second Isaiah would have preached that duty; they certainly were not obeying the spirit of his message.

So the opposition of Samaritans, Edomites, and others delayed the building of the Temple, and conspiracies were even formed to prevent it altogether. Complaints were sent to Darius denying the edict of Cyrus, and suggesting all sorts of evils that would result from the rebuilding of the Temple and city. But the Jews also appealed to the Persian monarch. The record was looked up; the original document was found. Darius sent word to the local governor not to hinder the work, but even to lend it State aid. With such endorsement, the work thrived. First they cleared away the vast accumulations of rubbish, brought cedar from Lebanon and stone from the quarries, once more engaging the services of workmen from Zidon and Tyre. In four years the new Temple was ready—516. There was no attempt to follow the plan of Ezekiel, nor was it intended; that was but an ideal. Of course, it was a much humbler structure than the magnificent Temple of Solomon. The people were poor and the task beset with difficulties. Yet the work was prompted by truer religious feeling. It was not built by a great king to give dignity to his nation, but by the rank and file of the people out of

their hardly spared means to bring them in closer communion with God.

Haggai was not the only prophet who spurred on the people to build the Temple. There was a younger contemporary, ZECHARIAH, who did much to feed their zeal. In a series of visions he pictured the glories of the new Jerusalem. He expected great things of the new temple. He believed that Zerubbabel would not continue to be Persia's vassal, but Judah's independent king, the *Messiah* (*i. e.*, God's anointed), while Joshua would be raised from high-priest of a colony to high-priest of a nation. These hopes were so far encouraged that the Jews of Babylon sent a crown for Zerubbabel. But any such attempt, if really made to throw off the Persian yoke, was soon nipped in the bud. Such things were not to be: Judah has to learn now more than ever that greatness as a nation is no longer for them. A momentary independence may come, as it did; still, their greatness is to lie in another direction—it must be spiritual.

Perhaps Zechariah may have felt something of this too (see Bible text). For in fostering hopes for Israel's Messiah, he thinks less of a triumphant king than of a king who will deepen the *moral* tone of the people and feed their religious life. From this time on the hoped-for Messiah is given more and more of this religious character.

For Zechariah had in him something of the spirit

of the great prophets and often repeated their words. Here are some quotations from his book:

"When ye fasted, did ye fast to Me? Execute true judgment and show mercy and compassion, every man to his brother; and oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor. And let none of you imagine evil against your brother in your heart.

"But now thus saith the Lord, I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. And Jerusalem shall be called the city of truth, the mountain of the Lord of Hosts, the holy mountain. There shall old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, every man with his staff in his hand for every age. And the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets.

"But do these things: Speak ye every man the truth unto his neighbor; execute truth and peace in your gates; let none imagine evil in your hearts against your neighbor; love no false oath. For these things I hate, saith the Lord.

"Thus saith the Lord, The fasts of the fourth month, the fifth month, the seventh and the tenth month, shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness and cheerful feasts. Therefore love ye truth and peace.

"It shall come to pass that many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord in Jerusalem. In those days ten men out of the different nations shall even take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.

In what respect did the Second Temple surpass the glory of the First?

NOTES FOR TEACHERS AND ADVANCED PUPILS.

As though to rebuke those who were disappointed at the humble structure the Second Temple presented, and to bring home

to them the spirit of religion for which it stood, a prophet of the time said: "Thus saith the Lord, the heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; what manner of house will ye build unto me and what place shall be my rest? For all these things hath mine hand made. But to this man will I look, to him that is of a contrite spirit and trembleth at my word." Isaiah lxvi., 1, 2.

Read Psalms cxx.-cxxxiv., called "Songs of Ascents." They were sung by the pilgrims as they approached nearer and nearer to Jerusalem, and were probably also sung again at the dedication of the Temple.

The last verse of Haggai voices the hope as definitely as he dared that Zerubbabel, Judah's governor, would yet become Judah's king (Messiah): "In that day I will take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, and will make thee as a signet, for I have chosen thee, saith the Lord."

It is very interesting to notice the development of the Messiah idea. First, the expectation of a king merely; next, a king who will be a religious regenerator of Israel; third, the messenger of God who will bring the knowledge of Him and His Law to all the world.

See Stanley's "Jewish Church," vol. iii. p. 117 for details wherein the Second Temple differed from the First.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

EZRA, THE SCRIBE.

BIBLE TEXT. "Give me understanding, O Lord, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart."

Psalms cxix. 34.

How fared the new settlement in Judah? Not as well as they might have wished. It was not smooth

sailing, this building up of a ruined land. Not much power was given to the twelve Jewish overseers, of whom Zerubbabel was head. A Persian satrap ruled all the country west of the Euphrates. Under him were all the local pashas, governors of different towns, while the satrap, again, was subject to the Persian king, whose residence was in his capital at Shushan.

The Samaritans and Edomites were spitefully trying to make life as uncomfortable as possible for the Jewish settlers. Every now and again they would plan a conspiracy, or lodge a complaint with the satrap or even the Persian king, that they were attempting something treasonable. Perhaps there was an attempt to put Zerubbabel on the throne and to make a dash for independence again. If there was, certainly wiser counsels prevailed. It was owing to these enemies and their plots that the walls of Jerusalem, which they were rebuilding, were torn down again.

Further, taxes were heavy and the harvests were not always good. Persian armies on their way to battle would often have to be fed and housed as they passed through.

In the face of all these difficulties, can we be surprised that they began to neglect their religious duties? Such was the case. Many drifted away from the Temple and its worship, intermarried with the heathen, and began to lead heathen lives. Some

were losing faith, fearing that God was still wroth with His people.

But the bad state of their religious affairs must have reached the ears of the larger colony of Jews in Babylonia. For, strange to say, Babylon, not Jerusalem, was now the centre of Jewish life and Jewish feeling. Although they had no Temple, they had many houses of prayer; they studied the Word of God from the sacred writings loyally carried with them into exile, and faithfully fulfilled its many observances. They now felt responsible for the band of pilgrims who had left them eighty years before, and realized the necessity of sending teachers out to them. Indeed, hearing that the Temple was built again, many pious Jews were anxious to go to the home of their fathers, although they had never seen the hills of Ephraim or the Plain of Sharon.

Among these, one stands first and foremost—EZRA, “a ready scribe of the law of Moses.” He had been a priest and teacher among his people in Babylon, and showed all the zeal of an Elijah and the faith of an Ezekiel. He now felt called to bring the message of God’s law to his brethren in the Holy Land.

Darius and his successor, Xerxes, were both dead, and Artaxerxes now sat upon the throne of Persia. From this king, Ezra obtained permission to leave with a body of emigrants for Judea in the year 458.

Artaxerxes willingly granted the request, in a written edict something like that which had been granted by Cyrus to Zerubbabel. He also assisted the party with presents of gold and silver for the Temple, and useful gifts for their own needs of wheat, wine, oil, and salt. He further freed them from paying taxes. Some of the Persian nobles likewise sent presents to the Temple—almost believing in the God of Israel. He was also empowered to appoint, on his arrival, such magistrates and judges as he found needful. Both in this pilgrimage and in the first, priests had to be persuaded to join the party; the office does not always decide the fervor of the man!

The pious Ezra decreed a solemn fast before starting. All then met by appointment on the banks of a river called Ahava, which was to be the starting-place. So this second pilgrimage of a few thousand souls began the weary four months' journey across the desert to Jerusalem. They had no armed guard—Ezra had refrained from asking it; he must show that he relied, not on the arm of man, but on God.

Nothing happened on the way, and they arrived safely at their journey's end. They were greeted joyfully. Their presence, led by the great scholar, whose fame had reached Judea, gave new encouragement to the more earnest, and all, indeed, were pleased at the favorable message sent by the king and the presents for the Temple

But Ezra saw a sad state of affairs. Something of the despair of Moses on finding Israel worshipping a calf on his return from Sinai, was felt by Ezra when he learned that the Jewish people, including the nobles and the priests, were intermarrying with Canaanites, Moabites, Edomites and Egyptians, and leading heathen lives.

Ezra tore his hair and rent his clothes, and sat bowed on the ground of the Temple court in astonishment and anguish of spirit. The faithful gathered about him, and not till after the evening sacrifice did he break his silent grief in a burst of prayer. As he prayed in tribulation and entreaty, his words choked with tears, quite a number of people who had come to the sacrificial service gathered about him, drawn by his fervent words. As he prayed, his fervor began to take hold of them; their religious feelings were aroused, and they gradually realized that they had neglected their duty. At last one Jeconiah came forward and said:

“We have sinned in marrying foreign women of the people of the land. Yet is there hope for Israel. Let us make a covenant to put away all these wives and such as are born of them. Let it be done according to the law. Arise, for the matter belongeth to thee. We will be with thee. Be of good courage, and do it!”

Ezra seized the penitent moment to make them swear to put away their heathen wives. An assembly of the heads of the families was at once called:

“Whosoever refuses to come within three days, his substance shall be forfeited, and he shall be separated from the congregation.

Ah! Ezra was a man of sternness and determination. They came, and he gathered them in the open air. In spite of the pouring rain and the December cold, he did not dismiss them until he had exacted a promise that they would put away their idolatrous wives. How his zeal must have infected them to gather in that drenching storm, and to give their consent to so great a sacrifice!

But, though his intention was most worthy, does not the act seem to us rather cruel? We must not forget, however, that he wished to save the people from idolatry and from the sins that grew out of it. If the father worshiped the God of righteousness and the mother Baal or Moloch, what would become of the children? Would they not probably follow the religion of their mothers? For our mothers are our first teachers. We must learn of God and duty from them, if from any.

Still, we cannot quite imagine the great prophets acting in this way. Had not one of them said: “My House shall be a House of prayer for all nations?” Surely the wives could have been taught the truth. Some of their neighbors, Samaritans and others, were hardly idolators. They were seeking something higher.

Indeed, by no means all yielded to the priest's

severe demand. Much bitter feeling was aroused, especially as a court of enquiry was instituted to search out every case. The surrounding nations, finding their daughters rejected in this way, renewed their old attacks on the Jews. Among their opponents there are especially mentioned Sanballat of Samaria, Tobiah the Ammonite, and Geshem, an Arabian, who were united by marriage to the Israelites and had become proselytes.

The Jews were about to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, which had again been destroyed in the Persian wars. But their enemies pointed out to Artaxerxes the danger of permitting the rebuilding of the city defences. They spoke of Jerusalem as "a rebellious city, hurtful to kings and provinces, a centre for sedition." Their slander succeeded, and for many years the walls still remained in ruins.

So affairs continued in this unsettled state. Sanballat and Tobiah, not recognized by Ezra as full Israelites, organized all the discontents against Ezra and the pious party. The confusion arising from a Syrian revolt against Persia gave them a special opportunity to attack Judah. Sanballat and Tobiah could not have very much loved the Faith they professed, but which they were preparing to overthrow.

What was to be done? Ezra was a teacher, a priest, a religious leader, but he was not a warrior.

Some such man was needed, as they would soon be coming to blows. Certainly Ezra had not the means to organize an army in defence. So, after some years, it was decided to send for relief to Babylon.

Why were the Jews in Babylon more zealous than those in Judæa?

NOTES FOR TEACHERS AND ADVANCED PUPILS.

Ezra was a Scribe (Heb. *Sopher*). This was an order of Jewish scholars, who followed the prophets and preceded the rabbis. They were expounders and interpreters of the Law. We might call them religious lawyers.

Notice that the LAW, the book of sacred authority, begins to take the place of the living word of the prophet.

Ezra had all the zeal of the prophets but nothing of their liberality. He reminds us more of the priest, with this difference, that he was less interested in the Temple than in the Law. This is the time when additional ceremonies and restrictions enter Judaism as an added protection to the Law—*Seyag Torah*—i. e., “fence around the Law,” as they came to be called. Much attention was given to regulations of ritual cleanliness.

A grandson of the high-priest having married a daughter of Sanballat, governor of Samaria, was banished for refusing to send away his wife. He was made priest of a temple that the Samaritans—forbidden to participate in the Zion Temple—had built on Mount Gerizim. They chose Gerizim, as it was the mountain on which the blessings were recited by Moses and Joshua.

John Hyrcanus, a later Jewish king, destroyed this temple. Like Israel, they enjoyed advantages under Hellenism and suffered under Antiochus, the Roman yoke, and the edicts of Christian Emperors. They produced a few books in Arabic in the Middle Ages, and have preserved to this day a copy of the Pentateuch. But though desirous of being faithful to its teachings,

they failed to grasp the spirit of Judaism or to enter into the greatness of its idea. There are still a few Samaritans in Shechem, near Gerizim, but the community is slowly dying out.

Read "The Harvest Festival" (Disraeli), Readings and Recitations, J. P. S. A.

CHAPTER XXXV.

NEHEMIAH.

**BIBLE TEXT: "Thou hast dealt well with thy servant,
O Lord; teach me good judgment and knowledge,
for I have believed in thy Commandments."**

Psalm cxix. 65, 66.

We must leave Judah now for a little and return to the exiles. Not to the exiles of Babylon, for do not forget that Jews were now living in many other lands outside of Palestine. Let us go to one of the great cities of Persia proper. We know that a large number of Jews must have lived in Persia, as the story of Esther is laid there. If the Persian kings were for the most part kind to the Jews in their distant provinces, they would be likely to be kind to them near at hand. This was certainly the case with Artaxerxes, successor of Darius. For we find he had made a Jew, NEHEMIAH, his cup-bearer (butler). This was quite an important office and was only given to a man whom the king both trusted and liked. See chapter xxii., where Sennacherib sends his cup-bearer as one of his ambassadors to Hezekiah.

While waiting on the king in the palace at the capital, Susa (Shushan), a city situated on the river Ulai, 150 miles north of the Persian Gulf, in the year 445, some messengers from Judah came and brought him sad news.

“The Jews of Jerusalem are in great affliction and reproach. The walls are broken down and the gates are burnt with fire.”

Nehemiah loved both his people and his Faith. He was resolute and energetic. It was for these reasons, probably, he was sought in the hour of extremity. He wept, fasted and poured out his soul in prayer. But he was not a man to be satisfied with sitting and mourning over his troubles. He must do something for his people. His prayer gave him courage and helped his resolution. He would appeal to the king.

At the risk of earning the king's displeasure, he went about with a woebegone face. “Why,” said the king kindly, “so sad, seeing thou art not sick; this is nothing else but sorrow of heart.” Here was Nehemiah's opportunity :

“Why should not my countenance be sad when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, hath been laid waste and the gates thereof consumed with fire. If it please the king that thou wouldst send me into Judea that I may build it.”

Sorry to lose his favorite, but anxious to please him, the king consented. Not many men would

give up a high post in the royal palace in one of the gayest capitals of the olden time, to go and take charge of a poor colony in a distant land.

Armed with letters to all the governors beyond the river and to the keeper of the king's forest to grant him timber, and accompanied by a mounted guard—Nehemiah set out for Jerusalem. He came as governor of Judea.

Surprised and delighted were the resident Jews at Nehemiah's arrival and on learning, too, all he intended doing for them. But he said little. When he found himself in the once fair city of Zion, he quietly examined its condition by night. What ruin and desolation met his eyes. The task was more difficult than he had imagined. But he did not swerve from his purpose.

As soon as the enemies of Israel's peace, Sanballat—the Samaritan, Tobiah—the Ammonite, and Geshem—the Arabian, heard that a newly arrived governor, Nehemiah, was about to rebuild Jerusalem, they laughed the idea to scorn and called it treason against Persia.

But in spite of their sneers and threats, the good work was begun. Many of the wealthy contributed liberally to the repairing of the walls and the turrets. But heaps of ruins had to be cleared away before the work of construction could begin. So bitter was the opposition of the Samaritan party that Nehemiah had to arm one half of the people while the other

half worked. A strict watch had to be maintained as though it were a battlefield. Some kept guard all night. In order to be prepared for any unforeseen attack, a trumpet was to be sounded to give the alarm in time. Was ever a city built under such strange conditions! A man of less force of character could not have held the people to the work under such perilous circumstances.

When, in spite of all, the walls were finished all but the gates, the enemies tried to betray Nehemiah by cunning, seeing they could not defeat him by force. Messages, apparently friendly, were sent him, inviting him to a conference, but he saw through the ruse. Then threatening letters were sent, warning him of danger. But his very bravery saved him. "Should such a man as I flee," he said, when asked to take refuge in the Temple. All sorts of plots were laid to entrap him, but in vain. Nehemiah was as vigilant as he was fearless, and defeated them all. In fifty-two days the work was done. We to-day can hardly understand the importance of walls for cities in ancient times. Until the walls, its chief defence, were raised, a city could hardly be said to be built at all.

When the doors were set up and the porters appointed, Nehemiah had a joyful ceremony of dedication. The celebrations were accompanied with thanksgivings sung to the harp and the psalter. The singers came from the surrounding places, for

Jerusalem was as yet sparsely inhabited. The princes led the procession along the walls.

"They offered great sacrifices that day; for God had made them rejoice with great joy; the women also and the children rejoiced; so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off."

The walls were completed and a regular guard appointed at the gates. The capital was now well fortified against its enemies. Adjoining the Temple was a fort as a further defence for the sanctuary. But Jerusalem's streets were almost empty. Most of the people lived in the villages beyond. This would not do. Nehemiah decided that Jerusalem must be a strong and populous capital. So some were persuaded to settle there; and, in addition, one-tenth of the people were chosen by lot to live there. Gradually its population increased further. Trade began to flourish. They were dealing again with Tyre, not for timber, but for fish. Bazaars and stalls lined the streets for the supply, not only of necessities, but of some luxuries, too. Soon Jerusalem presented the comfortable appearance it had shown before Nebuchadrezzar, the Babylonian, had laid it in ruins and taken its inhabitants into exile.

Cities beyond Jerusalem also came to be populated. For while the original permission of Cyrus may have applied to a very small part of Judah—not much beyond the capital, we may be sure that additional grants of land were added from time to time by later

kings, and that additional groups of pilgrims from Babylon and elsewhere came to occupy them. Some refugees, descendants of the old Ten Tribes may have drifted from their place of transportation into the restored land. And just as the exiles from Babylonia, originally from Judah, settled in Judah again, so some of these exiles from what was once Assyria, originally from Israel, came to settle in the North, where the Ten Tribes were once located. Not all who came from other lands to settle in Palestine were Jews; there were other nationalities, too.

So much had Nehemiah accomplished for the material welfare of the land. But his greatest work was the aid he gave to Ezra in reviving the religious consciousness of the exiles. Without him Ezra could never have succeeded in winning the people to a general acceptance of the Law. Together they were able to direct the daily life of the restored Israel in obedience to its rules and its principles.

A great assembly was called of men and women and also children old enough to understand. So much was done through public gatherings when books were rare and readers rarer. It was the first day of the seventh month (Tishri), the solemn occasion of Blowing the Trumpets, and the meeting was at early dawn.

“They gathered as one man in the open place that was before the water-gate. Ezra, the priest, brought the Law before the Congregation, before all that could hear with under-

standing. And he read from early morning to midday and the ears of all were attentive to the Book of the Law. Ezra stood upon a pulpit of wood that had been made for the purpose. Also the Levites caused the people to understand the Law; for they read in the Law distinctly and gave the sense.

All the people wept when they heard the words of the Law, He said, go your way, eat and drink and send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared. Neither be ye grieved. For the joy of the Lord is your strength!"

On the next day Ezra studied the Law with the people. They now learnt that on the Feast of Ingathering (Tishri 15th) they should not only celebrate a harvest feast, but should also dwell in booths. So they raised tents in the courtyards and on the low roofs of the houses.

How little they know of the institutions of their Faith, till Ezra brought the Law to them from Babylon! Many of its precepts created among them as much surprise as had the reading of Deuteronomy in the days of Josiah. How they trembled as they heard the awful punishments awaiting those who disobeyed. But in the days of Josiah, idolatry was the great evil. Now they no longer feared they would lapse into the worship of images again. That weakness was gone forever. But the teachers found that there were many rites, many ritual observances and many duties to the poor, that they had neglected or had never known.

Ezra and Nehemiah, the Levites and the most

zealous seized this stirring moment to deepen the religious impression made on the hearts of the people. The gathering, deeply impressed, readily promised to maintain the Temple, the priests and the offerings by a yearly tax of one-third of a shekel. The supply of wood for the altar-fires was quite a department in itself. Although Ezra and Nehemiah placed more importance on Temple sacrifice and on ceremonial than we might think necessary, do not forget that they laid equal stress on obedience to the *moral* precepts of the Law.

Never till this time had Israel old or new wholly lived according to the codes of law scattered through the Pentateuch. This Law with other precepts and usages that grew out of it came to be the guide not only of their religious, but also of their civil life—the law of the land in fact, as far as they were permitted to govern themselves.

This Law was not sufficient in itself for every need of life. But it became a basis from which the scribes and later the rabbis developed further laws. It steadily grew under their logical, but ever reverent guidance to meet the more complex wants of later ages. These later precepts were called "The Oral Law" as distinct from the Pentateuch, "The Written Law." For tradition says that even these later injunctions were taught by Moses to the elders by word of mouth. It also received the name of *Mishna* or Second Law. The faithful devotion of

the Jews to the Scripture from now on, in growing intensity, earned them the name of "The People of the Book."

Is it safer to be timid than courageous?

NOTES FOR TEACHERS AND ADVANCED PUPILS.

Think of Nehemiah as a hero and notice how each incident in his life bears out this title.

The Jews were beginning to be dispersed in many lands. Their centre was still Judea and all outside of it was called *The Diaspora*. Their dispersion began very early. Already after the wars of the 9th and 10th centuries many Northern Israelites were carried to other lands and some escaped to the different shores of the Mediterranean and to the Southern Arabia.

Ezra's Assembly grew into a permanent body for the internal government of Israel. It came to be called "The Men of the Great Synagogue." See "Ethics of the Fathers," chapter i., Jewish Prayer Book.

In Ezra and Nehemiah we see the minister and the layman working side by side. Each with his separate experience and outlook, how much they can achieve when they join their forces in life! Compare Hezekiah and Isaiah supporting each other's hands; and, many centuries later in Babylon, the Resh-Gelutha (head of the captivity) aiding the rabbinical master of the Academy.

Ezra in the pulpit, expounding the Scripture foreshadows the modern minister.

"Weep not, for the joy of the Lord is your strength." Religion's function is not to sadden, but to cheer.

Read Ps. cxix. in praise of the Law. Read "Nehemiah" and "Nehemiah, Reformer" (Reade), Readings and Recitations J. P. S. A.

CHAPTER XXXVI. •

MALACHI—THE DAY OF JUDGMENT.

BIBLE TEXT: "Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, profaning the covenant of our fathers?" *Malachi ii. 10.*

In insisting on Israel's obligations to God, Nehemiah did not forget their duties to man. He found the condition of the poor sad indeed. They came crying to him, hoping that this governor, who had shown himself so powerful, would help them. The harvests were bad, and they had to mortgage their fields, vineyards, and homes to buy food. But that was not the worst. They had to sell their children as servants to pay their debts.

In righteous anger, Nehemiah gathered the nobles at a great assembly, and said to them:

"Ye exact usury, every one of his brother. We in Babylon *redeemed* our brethren, sold to the heathen, according to our ability, and will ye *sell* your brethren?"

They held their peace, and found nothing to answer.

"Ought ye not to walk in the fear of our God? Let us leave off this usury. Restore, I pray you, even this day, their fields, vineyards, olive-yards, and houses."

They said, "We will restore them, and will require nothing of them."

"I called the priests and took an oath of them. Then I shook out my lap and said, "So God shake out every man from his house and his labor that performeth not this promise."

The congregation answered Amen and praised the Lord. And the people did according to this promise.

To further help them, Nehemiah and his staff declined the revenue of bread, wine, and silver that had been paid to previous governors and was their right to exact.

Very much did Nehemiah accomplish during the twelve years of his governorship of Judea, and the influence of his personality is best proved by the fact that when he returned to Persia his absence was felt at once. Many of his reforms were neglected and some of the old abuses returned, especially in connection with the maintenance of the Temple and its service. The priests were careless about the offerings, and brought to the altar blemished cattle. Probably the aged Ezra was now dead.

This reached the ears of Nehemiah in Shushan. He obtained leave from Artaxerxes to return to Judea. With his old determined energy, he awakened the people to their obligations:

"I contended with the nobles, saying, 'Why is the House of God forsaken?'"

Very soon the tithes were being paid again and the priests were fulfilling their duties.

Intermarriage with the heathen had also taken place in his absence. Ezra had never succeeded in uprooting this practice. Even some of the priests had been the offenders, so indifferent had they become. With scathing severity, Nehemiah denounced this menace to Israel's future. By degrees

intermarriage was given up altogether, and came to be regarded as a grave sin in later days.

But the hardest evil to reform was the desecration of the Sabbath. For until the arrival of Ezra it had been observed with great laxity. Ezra and Nehemiah brought from Babylon a new Sabbath, so to speak, that they had not known :

“I saw in Judah some treading wine-presses on the Sabbath, and bringing in sheaves and lading asses therewith ; also wine, grapes, figs, and all manner of burdens. Men of Tyre brought fish and all manner of ware, and sold on the Sabbath to the children of Judah in Jerusalem.”

All this was changed by Nehemiah, but not without perseverance. At last the city gates were closed, and the Sabbath was kept in rest, quiet, and sanctity. The holiness that now pervaded the Sabbath day and that continued to distinguish it for hundreds of years afterwards, was first due to the zeal of Nehemiah.

We are hearing little about the prophets now, for their day has almost passed. But one more appeared in the days of Nehemiah. His name was MALACHI ; or this may only have been a title meaning “ messenger.” The evils against which Nehemiah had to contend we find reflected in his book. You may have already noticed that in this way the prophets are valuable sources of the history of their time.

He begins by rebuking the half-hearted priests,

as did Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Micah before him. For if the spiritual guides are not conscientious and zealous, what can we expect of the people? "Even among the Gentiles," says Malachi, "God's name is more esteemed."

"O that there was one among you that would shut the doors [of my House], that ye might not kindle fire on mine altar in vain. My covenant with Levi [the priest tribe] was for life and peace. The law of truth was in his mouth and unrighteousness was not found on his lips; he walked with me in peace and uprightness, and did turn many away from iniquity. The priest's lips should keep knowledge, and the people should seek the law at his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of Hosts."

Here is a fine ideal for priests and ministers of all time!

He next touches upon the evil of intermarriage with "daughters of a strange god," but also reminds Israel that they dare not deal treacherously against the wives of their youth. Perhaps here he took issue with the extreme rigor of Ezra in sending away the women once taken in marriage, even though they were heathen. "I hate putting away, saith the Lord of Hosts."

Next he considers perhaps the greatest evil of his time—the people's lack of faith.

"Ye say: 'Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the Lord. Where is the God of justice?' . . . It is vain to serve God. What profit is it that we have kept his charge, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord? The proud are happy; yea, they that work wickedness are built up; they tempt God and are delivered."

Here is the old cry heard so much then, and heard still to this day—the attempt to measure God's approval by our success in life, and His disapproval by our misfortune. That was why Judah lost faith when the good Josiah was defeated and slain. That was why the exiles doubted God's love and care till the Second Isaiah had reassured them. What was Malachi's answer?—a day of retribution will come.

“I will send my messenger to prepare the way before Me, and few will abide the day of his coming. He will purify the sons of Levi. He will be a swift witness against sorcerers, adulterers, and false swearers, against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, and they that turn aside the stranger from his right and fear not Me, saith the Lord of Hosts. For I the Lord change not.”

God will not forget those who fear Him, Malachi assures his generation, but will write them in His book of remembrance. They shall be God's peculiar treasure. Then people will at last see the difference between “the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not.” That shall be the Judgment Day, which will be heralded by the great and undying Elijah.

This is Malachi's last word and the last word of prophecy, as far as we know. This closes, too, as much of Jewish history as is contained in the Bible, though some historical hints are found in the late Psalms, in Daniel and some other of the “Writings.”

To follow the history further, we must turn to later records. We know that the Jews continued under Persian rule till the scene shifted again, and Greece was the great world-power. For many years Egypt and Syria, both fragments of the Greek empire, wrangled for the land of our fathers. Then, after a brief period of independence under the Maccabees, all-conquering Rome absorbs the land of our fathers. Later still, their Temple is destroyed, their nationality crushed, and they are scattered through the world.

But in every phase of Israel's checkered history, we see the guiding hand of Providence moulding them to His purpose and doing all things for the best. The great prophet of Babylon still brings solace to our people's woe by teaching the purpose of their suffering. It is bound up with their mission—to bring a knowledge of God and his righteousness to all the children of men.

Why did the order of prophets cease at this time?

NOTES FOR TEACHERS AND ADVANCED PUPILS.

While we cannot but admire the energy, the zeal, and the self-sacrifice of Nehemiah, we must not be blind to one fault—his anxiety to be rewarded for his merit. "Remember me, O God, for good," occurs very often. These, in fact, are his last words at the close of his annals. Had he lived a little later, he would have heard Antigonus of Socho teach: "Be not like servants who serve the master with the hope of reward, but be like those who serve the master without any expectation of reward."

As Judaism developed further, distinct schools came into existence presenting two different phases of religious thought—the Pharisees (Conservatives), the Sadducees (Liberals).

As synagogues started in the Exile came to be more sought by the people, distinct services for each day (morning, afternoon, and evening, were arranged). By gradual additions this grew into the Liturgy. The *Sh'ma* (declaration of God's unity) became the centre of the service, and special benedictions were placed before and after it. By the time the Temple was destroyed, the synagogue was prepared to take its place.



JEREMIAH DENOUNCING THE KINGDOM OF JUDAH.

See page 177.



ESTHER DENOUNCING HAMAN.

Schnorr. See page 286.

APPENDIX.

THE LARGER PROPHETIC BOOKS.

ISAIAH,

I.

Isaiah received his prophetic call in the year King Uzziah died (740), and preached during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah.

For convenience, we may consider the book in the following divisions:

(a). Chaps. i.-xii.—Early prophecies concerning Judah and Israel during that eventful period between 740 and 701 B. C. E. Look back chaps. xviii.-xx. Denunciation of evils of the time—vanity, dissipation, injustice to the poor. Foretells ruin and survival of righteous remnant. Condemns Judah's alliance with Assyria, which is but an instrument in God's hands.

(b). xiii.-xxiii.—Mostly prophecies concerning foreign nations, Assyria, Babylon, Philistia, Egypt, Ethiopia, Tyre, Damascus, Edom, and Moab.

(c). xxiv.-xxvii.—“Divine judgment upon the world and redemption of God's people.”

(d). xxviii.-xxxiii.—Relations and conflicts between Judah and Assyria.

(e). xxiv.-xxxv.—Future of Edom foretold in contrast with future of Israel.

(f). xxxvi.-xxxix.—A narrative portion telling the Sennacherib incident, Hezekiah's illness, and the embassy of Merodach-Baladin, all narrated also in 2 Kings. Look back ch. xxii., xxxii.

II.

Chap. xl.-lxvi.

These chapters, for the most part, dwell on Israel's restoration from Babylonian captivity; their author is sometimes called the "Second Isaiah." Here, again, we may distinguish three divisions:

(a). xl.-xlvi.—Assurance of deliverance through Cyrus the Persian. The prophet seizes the occasion to deepen Israel's faith in God, telling them they are to be His witness to the Gentiles.

(b). xlix.-lix.—If Israel will purify itself, it will become God's servant to man. But the bearing of this divine message will involve much suffering that must be patiently borne.

(c). lx.-lxvi.—Pictures of the glorious Zion of the future, mingled with rebuke, consolation, and hope.

Look back chap. xxxi.

Read "Isaiah." Matthew Arnold: London, 1872.

JEREMIAH.

Jeremiah's first utterance as prophet was in the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign, 626. But his activity in the State does not begin till the reign of Jehoiakim, and continued till the destruction of Jerusalem, 586.

Summary of his book:

i.-x.—His call as a youth; his first address against the idolatries of Judah; warning of punishment from the North bringing desolation. Condemns ceremonial when not accompanied by pure life.

xi.-xvii.—Preaches "the Law" of Josiah. Impatience with opponents; despair. Later consolation.

xviii.-xxiv.—Exhortation on the Sabbath: lesson of the potter; judgments against royalty and false prophets; rebukes remnant in Jerusalem; foresees the captivity; condemns mistaken policy of Israel's neighbors and the foes within: promise of Restoration and the "new covenant" to be written in their hearts.

xxv.-xliii.—Condemns broken faith to the slaves; lesson from

the Rechabites; Jeremiah's woes during the siege of Jerusalem and particulars of his life after the capture.

xliv.-lii.—Rebuke of exiles in Egypt; of Baruch, his servant. Prophecies concerning foreign nations. The capture of Jerusalem.

Jeremiah's character and experience are fully treated in Book III. of this volume. His style was simple, spontaneous, and touching. His far-sightedness, his breadth of view, his bold demand for the religion of the heart and his indifference to all else, are remarkable even among a body of prophets who all more or less are distinguished for these qualities.

EZEKIEL.

Ezekiel, one of the captives carried with Jehoiachin to Babylon in 597, belonged to the priestly aristocracy. He first spoke in 592. Book falls into three sections:

(a). i.-xxiv.—*The approaching fall of Jerusalem*: Portrayed symbolically: weakness and idolatries of people made responsible. But righteous remnant will be saved. Comfortingly assures exiles that they will not have to suffer for the sins of their fathers.

(b). xxv.-xxxii.—*Prophecies on foreign nations*: Like most of the prophets, Ezekiel follows the fate and fortunes of surrounding nations. Tyre and Egypt are treated elaborately, and more briefly, Ammon, Moab, Edom, and Philistia.

(c). xxxiii.-xlvi.—*Israel's future restoration*: Although Jerusalem had fallen, there was much hope for the repentant. In a vision in "the valley of dry bones," he depicts Israel's revival and restoration. Their eventual triumph will teach the nations the knowledge of the true God. In a series of visions he portrays the rebuilding of a new Jerusalem, a Temple vaster and more magnificent than the old, and a reorganized government with Israel as God's people.

Ezekiel emphasizes the *power* and *holiness* of God. His style is more prosaic than the earlier prophets. As against their splendid outbursts, he is self-contained. His whole book is arranged by his own hand.

Look back chap. xxx.

THE TWELVE SMALLER PROPHETIC BOOKS

HOSEA.

Hosea was the prophet of the decline of the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

The book falls into two parts:

(a). i.-iv.—Belongs to the end of the reign of Jeroboam II. Israel's unfaithfulness to God is pictured under the figure of an unfaithful wife. But her punishment will be the means of chastening and redeeming her and then she will be reconciled to God.

(b). v.-xiv.—Written during the reigns of anarchy and reverses that followed Jeroboam II.'s death. He dwells first on Israel's guilt, then on her punishment and lastly on the brighter future awaiting repentance. The wickedness of its leaders has been the ruin of the nation. It should not trust in Assyria, nor in strongholds. Rather should Israel renounce its sins and earn God's blessings.

Hosea's style is short and abrupt, showing strong emotion of the heart. He is perhaps the first to bring to man the message of God's grace.

For comparison between Amos and Hosea see chapter xvii.

JOEL.

This is a little book of three chapters. It opens with a picture of a locust plague accompanied by drought. Joel takes the occasion of this calamity to exhort Israel to repentance, for a more terrible visitation of God may be at hand. The second half presents God's gracious promise to a repentant people. The plague will depart, the land will be fruitful and Israel's enemies will be punished.

Joel probably flourished during the Persian period, possibly in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah.

AMOS.

Amos began prophesying "two years before the earthquake," that occurred in the latter part of Jeroboam II.'s reign—about 750.

Chapters i. and ii. are introductory, surveying all the nations around Israel and Judah and declaring that each will suffer for its individual sins.

Chapters iii. and vi. contain three discourses: (*a*) Reminder to Israel that God's choice of them brings added responsibility; (*b*) Plea for the spirit of religion as against its forms; (*c*) The coming judgment.

Chapters vii.-ix. Amos presents his lessons in symbolic pictures. These begin with gloomy foreboding, but close with promise of salvation to the faithful remnant.

Amos is significant as being the first of the written prophets. He begins a new epoch in religious history. For fuller description see chapter xvi.

OBADIAH.

This is a short prophecy against Edom, one of the neighboring nations often at enmity with Israel. Edom that rejoiced at Jerusalem's overthrow (586) shall also fall. But Israel shall be restored, Edom and Philistia becoming part of its possessions. This prophecy belongs either to the Exile or the Restoration.

JONAH.

Jonah, the *prophet*, lived in the reign of Jeroboam II. None of his prophecies have been preserved. The *book* of Jonah is a story about this prophet's life.

Called to preach repentance to the sinning people of Nineveh—capital of Assyria, Jonah takes ship at Joppa to flee, wishing to avoid this mission; for he fears that God will have mercy on Nineveh, and he does not wish its salvation.

After many strange adventures he finds that he cannot escape from God, and he cannot escape from duty. He now accepts the

call to preach to the people of Nineveh. They listen to his words, repent of their evil ways and are forgiven by God.

Through yet another trial Jonah is at last made to understand that God loves not one nation only, but all mankind and every living thing. For the Assyrians, though Israel's bitterest foes, are none the less God's children, since He sent an Israelite to preach to them and to save them.

Because of the appropriateness of its theme, this book is chosen for the prophetic lesson on the afternoon of Atonement Day.

MICAH.

Micah, born in Judah some years before the fall of the Northern Kingdom (720), was a younger contemporary of Isaiah. But, unlike Isaiah, he was "a man of the people." Though we do not find him participating in affairs of state, he nevertheless influenced his age.

His book falls into two parts:

(a). i.-v. The first three chapters depict the sins of Israel and Judah, which must eventually bring about their fall. He dwells on the avarice of those in power and on the oppression of the poor. Chapters iv. and v. take a more hopeful tone. One day Zion shall become the religious centre of the world. In the meantime great enemies will have to be encountered—the Assyrians, but in the happy future, war and idolatry will vanish together.

(b). vi.-vii. The second part opens with a rebuke not only of the princes and nobility, but of the whole people, picturing probably the corrupt days of Menasseh. It is presented in a series of dialogues. The first a controversy between "God and Israel," in which occurs that famous summary of religion, justice, mercy, humility (vi. 6-8). The second between "Israel and the Prophet," in which Micah assures the penitent people that their banished will be gathered and their land restored. In the third and last, "the Prophet and his God," Micah pray for the forgiveness of his people and for the fulfilment of God's promise.

See chapters xxi. and xxiii.

NAHUM.

The subject of this book of three chapters is the fall of Nineveh. The attack and destruction aided by the sudden inundation of the Tigris, is very vividly described. She falls, declares the prophet because of her violence, avarice and cruelty.

Nineveh was overthrown by the Babylonians and Medes, 607 B. C. E. So completely was it destroyed that no trace of it was left, until modern explorers unearthed its remains.

As a poet, Nahum is almost as fine as Isaiah.

HABAKKUK.

His prophecy was probably written in the reign of Jehoiakim about 600 B. C. E.

His speeches take the form of dialogues as in Micah vi-vii.

God will bring the Chaldeans to punish Judah for its violence and injustice. But will the good perish too? No. "The just will live by their faithfulness," but the wicked pride of Chaldea will be brought low.

Habakkuk's third and last chapter is a beautiful lyric poem, depicting the judgment of God. It contains the famous quotation: "In wrath remember mercy."

He was a contemporary of Jeremiah. See page 187.

ZEPHANIAH.

Zephaniah was a descendant of one Hezekiah, probably the king of that name, and prophesied in the early years of Josiah before the publication of the Law.

His prophecy may be divided into three heads, roughly corresponding to its three chapters.

(a). The threatened overthrow of the idolaters of Judah. The catastrophe will reach the courtiers, the merchants and the indifferent generally.

(b). Exhortation to repentance to escape the doom hanging over all sinful nations.

(c). The promise to the faithful of the restoration of God's presence among them. In this chapter occurs the famous quotation:

"All will call upon the name of God and serve Him with one consent."

HAGGAI.

Haggai lived after the restoration of the exiles to Judah. The two chapters of his book dwell chiefly on the duty of rebuilding the Temple. An account of his teaching and influence will be found in chapter xxxiii.

His style is plain, and it lacks the power and poetry of the great prophets. Prophecy was now fast dying out.

ZECHARIAH.

The writings of Zechariah will be found in the first eight chapters of the book bearing that name. He lived under Darius the Persian king about 520 B. C. E. He is mentioned in the book of Ezra as joining Haggai in urging the restored Israel to rebuild the Temple. See chap. xxxiii.

He presents his lessons in the form of eight visions. All have the one purpose in view of fostering the religious life of Israel and encouraging them with the prospect of a glorious future.

These visions are not easy to understand as they are all symbolic. We will give example of but one, in which are shown a golden candlestick and two olive trees. The candlestick was to represent Israel giving forth light. The oil to feed it comes from the two olive trees, one representing the State—Zerubbabel the prince, the other representing the Religion—Joshua the Priest. Since these chapters (iii-iv) dwell on the glories of the new Temple, they are chosen as the prophetic lesson for the Sabbath of Chanuka (Feast of Rededication of the Temple).

These visions of Zechariah are rather artificial. They show Persian influence.

Chaps. ix-xiv are writings of an earlier period.

MALACHI.

Malachi, contemporary of Ezra and Nehemiah uttered his prophecies during that period of depression and disappointment that continued for a long time after the Restoration. An account of his work and influence with extracts from his prophecies will be found in chap. xxxvi.

Malachi's style is unlike that of any of the preceding prophets, though he shares their moral fervor. First he utters his charge, then states the questioned objection of the people and at last answers their question by proving his charge. This is called the dialectic method and was later used in the schools of philosophy.

DESCRIPTION OF THE BIBLE BOOKS

From which the history in this volume is taken.

I KINGS.

The first portion of this book up to the death of Solomon is told in Vol. ii. Then follows the insurrection and the division into two nations—*Israel* and *Judah*. The accounts of the two kingdoms are told in brief summaries, but interspersed with very long narratives. To present the history contemporaneously the record jumps from Judah to Israel and from Israel to Judah after every reign or two. This makes the story somewhat involved though it is almost necessary from the many links uniting the two and the mingling of their events.

This book covers the history of Israel from Jeroboam down to Ahaziah. It tells of the wars between the rival kings, the different usurpations, the activity of the prophets and especially the work of Elijah. The reign of Ahab, with the Naboth incident and the appeal on Carmel related at great length.

The history of Judah is carried down to Jehoshaphat and is much less eventful. Judah is more conservative and more loyal both to the royal House of David and to the Temple.

2 *KINGS*.

The narrative continues here without a break, for 1 and 2 *Kings* were at first but one book.

In *Israel*, the narrative proceeds with the beautiful incident of Elijah's taking away. It tells the Elisha stories, the overthrow of the House of Omri, the varied fortunes of the House of Jehu in its disastrous wars with Syria and the climax of its glory under Jeroboam II when the boundaries of Solomon were won again. Then follow a series of usurpators and disasters, and the kingdom enters on its downward course to be at last absorbed by Assyria 721 B. C. E., end of chap. xvii.

Of the kingdom of *Judah* during the same period to the death of Ahaz, there is much less to tell. The conspiracy of Athaliah and the crowning of Joash are the only incidents fully described.

But when Israel has disappeared and *Judah* is the only kingdom, the rest of its history is related vividly and at length. The chief features are—the reforms of Hezekiah and Josiah, the Sennacherib invasion, the statesmanship of Isaiah, the woes of Jeremiah and the final overthrow of Jerusalem by Babylon; though for the completeness of the last part of the history we have to turn to the pages of Jeremiah.

Kings was probably a work of the prophets. Perhaps Jeremiah was one of the writers. The standard of conduct by which the different characters are judged is the Book of Deuteronomy. For this reason nearly all the Northern Kings and many of those of Judah are condemned as sinners.

1 AND 2 *CHRONICLES*.

Chronicles (Hebrew Dibre-Hayamim "acts of days") is a resume of the history from Adam to the Exile; or, better still, a history of the Kingdom of Judah somewhat idealized, with a brief summary of all that precedes it. It is written from the priestly point of view, laying special stress on everything connected with the Temple and its service. Hence the priestly

tribe of Levi also receives much attention. It is one of the latest Bible books.

Having given nine chapters to introduction, the history proper now begins with David, father of the royal House of Judah. After the Division, the Northern Kingdom is only referred to when brought in connection with Judah. The books of *Ezra* and *Nehemiah* which at one time formed part of this book, lay the same importance on ecclesiastical institutions.

Much of the material for this book has been taken from *Samuel* and *Kings*, and occasionally enlarged with fuller details. A comparative table of these enlargements will be found in Driver's "Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament," p. 487-493, from which valuable assistance has been obtained in preparing all these summaries of the Bible books.

These enlargements are chiefly statistics and details of Levitical organization. The author has taken great pains to make *Chronicles* a religious and edifying work, giving moral causes for all events and showing how virtue is ever rewarded and wickedness punished. It is written less as history than as homily.

EZRA.

Ezra and *Nehemiah* are counted as one book in the Jewish canon. They were part of *Chronicles* and later broken off; this may be ascertained from examining the last verses of *Chronicles* and the first verses of *Ezra*.

Chap. i-vii.—*Ezra* opens with the edict of Cyrus and a register of the families who returned to Canaan. Their early struggles with the Samaritans and their final building of the Temple at the urgency of Haggai and Zechariah next follows. There is then a gap of sixty years.

Chap. vii-x.—*Ezra's* journey from Babylon to Judah, and his endeavors to suppress intermarriage.

Ezra, *Nehemiah* and *Daniel* are written partly in Chaldaic, which became the language of our ancestors from the time of the Babylonian exile.

NEHEMIAH.

This book continues the narrative of *Ezra*, related partly by Nehemiah himself.

(a). i-vii.—The tidings of Jerusalem's ruined condition reaches Shushan at the Court of Artaxerxes. Nehemiah journeys to Judah rebuilds walls of Jerusalem in spite of opposition.

(b). viii-x.—He strengthens the hands of Ezra in teaching the Law and in binding the people by a covenant to observe it.

(c). xi-xiii.—Lists of those chosen to populate Jerusalem. Further details of civil and religious government of the city. Nehemiah's second visit, abolition of intermarriage and enforcement of Sabbath observance.

ADDITIONAL BIBLE BOOKS

Not treated in volumes 1 and 2.

DANIEL.

Daniel is the story of a royal youth, taken into exile among the Jewish captives by Nebuchadrezzar, remaining true to his Faith under all privations and perils and providentially saved from the jaws of death—a witness to the living God. He is also divinely gifted with prophetic wisdom and insight, interprets the king's dream foretelling the different powers that will rule the earth, reveals the writing on the wall of Babylon's downfall (in which occurs the famous sentence "thou art weighed in the balance and found wanting,") and has visions of Israel's future and the destiny of mankind.

The image in the dream, made of four materials, and the later vision of four beasts, both refer to the great powers that conquered Israel, that successively rose and fell—Chaldea, Medes, Persia and Macedonia.

This book was written about 168 B. C. E. during the persecution

of the Jews by the Græco-Syrian king, Antiochus Epiphanes, to whom they were subject. Its purpose was to encourage the sufferers to remain steadfast to Judaism under terrible trials and dangers by presenting the inspiring example of Daniel and his assurance of Israel's eventual salvation.

The Book of Daniel contains the most complete statement of life after death in the whole Bible:

"Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt. They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever." xii, 2, 3.

THE SONG OF SONGS.—(*Canticles.*)

This is the first of *The Five Megilloths* (rolls) the others being *Ruth*, *Lamentations*, *Ecclesiastes* and *Esther* (see vol. ii p. 247).

Song of Songs is a love poem in the form of a dialogue. King Solomon, meeting a Shulamite maiden, has her brought to his palace at Jerusalem, thinking she will be won by the splendors of the royal court. But the rustic maid, Shulamith, as she is named after her dwelling place, Shulem or Shumem, forgets not her humble associations and would be true to her shepherd lover. The king strives to win her affection, but in vain. At last her constancy is rewarded and she is permitted to leave the gaieties of the capital for her mountain home. Here she meets her lover and they are united, teaching by their simple trust "the superiority of genuine, spontaneous affection over that which may be purchased by wealth or rank." (Driver).

The Targum interprets the poem as an allegory depicting the history of Israel from the Exodus.

LAMENTATIONS.

Called in Hebrew also *Echah* from its first word. It contains five national poems, all lamenting the fall of Jerusalem (586) and

its sad consequences. The first four are arranged alphabetically. Its rhythm is "peculiar to Hebrew elegy."

Summary: I. Jerusalem's desolation. II. God's wrath with His people. III. Israel's plaint and consolation. IV. Zion's sad past and happy present. V. Israel's appeal for God's mercy.

For extracts see pages 198-200.

ESTHER.

The story of Esther belongs to Israel's Persian period. Esther must have lived a little earlier than Ezra, since she became the Queen of Ahasuerus *i.e.* Xerxes (485) the predecessor of Artaxerxes to whom Nehemiah was cup-bearer.

The story is as follows: "Upon Vashti refusing to come and display her beauty at the king's great feast at Shushan, he was advised to put her away lest she present a dangerous example of wifely disobedience. Wishing to replace her, the most beautiful women of Persia were gathered, and from them the king chose Esther the Jewess, adopted daughter of Mordecai, as queen.

Haman, the king's vizier, angry that Mordecai, who sat now at the palace gate, did not show him sufficient obeisance, resolved to destroy all the Jews for an imagined slight from one. Gaining the indolent king's consent, he chose by lot Adar 13th for the massacre. Mordecai appealed to Esther on behalf of the Jews, and she promised to intercede with the king. She invites the king and Haman to a banquet, but only after a second banquet to the same guests does she make her appeal. The king who has promised to grant her any request, learns now fully of Haman's plot which would also involve his queen and that he had built a gallows on which to hang Mordecai, a man who had once saved the monarch's life. Ahasuerus orders that the vizier be hung upon his own gallows and Mordecai is given his post. The fate threatening the Jews of Persia is happily averted.

To commemorate the happy delivery, they instituted an annual Feast on each Adar 14th and 15th, of gladness, of sending portions one to another and gifts to the poor.' The feast was called Purim,

in reference to the 'lot' (Pur) cast by Haman for the destruction of the Jews.

The Feast is preceded by 'Esther's Fast' on Adar 13th and the *Book of Esther* is read on the eve and morning of the 14th."

JOB.

Job, one of the books of "The Wisdom Literature," is the story of a worthy man, upon whom many calamities fall in quick succession. His oxen and asses are seized, his sheep and servants consumed, his camels stolen, and last, worst calamity of all, his children are killed by a whirlwind.

Yet Job's faith faltered not. He fell on the ground and worshiped, saying "The Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." He was now smitten with disease from head to foot, yet he sinned not. "Renounce God and die," said his wife. "What shall we receive good from the hand of God and shall we not receive evil?"

Three friends now came to comfort him and the whole book is taken up with their arguments about the ways of God with man, the relation of sin to misfortune. Ultimately it teaches, that we must not look upon life's reverses as direct punishments for wickedness. God's ways are past our finding out.

It is considered one of the greatest poems in literature and was probably written some time after the Exile, when problems such as these were earnestly considered.

The book falls into five parts, the first and last of which are in prose and the rest, the bulk of the book, in poetry.

Part I.—Introduction, i.-ii.

Part II.—Discussion between Job and his three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, iii.-xxxi.

Part III.—The argument of a fourth person—Elihu, xxxii.-xxxvii.

Part IV.—God's reply to Job, xxxviii.-xlii. 6.

Part V.—Epilogue. Return of Job's good fortune, xlii. 7-17.

Here are some extracts from the book:

SELECTIONS FROM JOB.

FROM CHAPTER XI.—THE UNSEARCHABLE GOD.

Canst thou by searching find
out God ?

Canst thou find out the Al-
mighty unto perfection ?

It is as high as héaven; what
canst thou do ?

Deeper than the grave; what
canst thou know ?

The measure thereof is longer
than the earth,

And broader than the sea.

If he cut off, and shut up, or
call unto judgment, then who
can hinder him ?

For he knoweth vain men;

He seeth wickedness also; will
he not then consider it ?

For vain man is void of under-
standing.

Yea, man is born like a wild
ass's colt.

If thou set aright thine heart,

And stretch out thine hands
toward him;

If iniquity be in thine hand,
put it far away,

And let not wickedness dwell
in thy tabernacles.

For then shalt thou lift up thy
face without spot;

Yea, thou shalt be steadfast,
and shalt not fear:

Because thou shalt forget thy
misery,

And remember it as waters
that pass away.

And thy life shall be clearer
than the noonday;

Though there be darkness it
shall be as morning.

And thou shalt be secure, be-
cause there is hope;

Yea, thou shalt dig about thee,
and thou shalt take thy rest in
safety.

Also thou shalt lie down, and
none shall make thee afraid;

Yea, many shall make suit
unto thee.

FROM CHAPTER XXVIII.—WHENCE COMES WISDOM ?

But where shall wisdom be
found ?

And where is the place of
understanding ?

Man knoweth not the price
thereof;

Neither is it found in the land
of the living.

The depth saith, It is not in me;
And the sea saith, It is not
with me.

It cannot be gotten for gold.

Neither shall silver be weighed
for the price thereof.

It cannot be valued with the
gold of Ophir,

With the precious onyx, or the
sapphire.

Gold and crystal cannot equal
it,

And the exchange of it shall
not be for jewels of fine gold.

No mention shall be made of
coral, or of pearls;

For the price of wisdom is
above rubies.

The topaz of Ethiopia shall
not equal it,

Neither shall it be valued with
pure gold.

Whence then cometh wisdom?

And where is the place of
understanding?

Seeing it is hid from the eyes
of all living,

And kept close from the fowls
of the air.

Destruction and death say,

We have heard the fame
thereof with our ears.

God understandeth the way
thereof,

And he knoweth the place
thereof.

For he looketh to the ends of
the earth,

And seeth under the whole
heaven;

To make a weight for the
wind;

And he weigheth the waters
by measure.

When he made a decree for
the rain,

And a way for the lightning
of the thunder;

Then did he see it, and de-
clare it;

He established it, yea, and
searched it out.

And unto man he said,

Behold, the fear of the Lord,
that is wisdom;

And to depart from evil is
understanding.

FROM CHAPTER XXIX.—JOB'S LAMENT.

Oh, that I were as in months
past,

As in the days when God
preserved me;

When his lamp shone upon
my head,

And by his light I walked
through darkness;

As I was in the days of my
youth,

When the secret of God was
upon my tent,

When the Almighty was yet
with me,

When my children were about
me;

When I washed my steps with
butter,

And the rock poured me out
rivers of oil;

When I went out to the gate
through the city,

When I prepared my seat in
the street!

The young men saw me, and
hid themselves,

And the aged arose, and stood
up.

The princes refrained talking,
And laid their hand on their
mouth.

The nobles held their peace,
And their tongue cleaved to
the roof of their mouth.

When the ear heard me, then
it blessed me;

And when the eye saw me, it
gave witness to me:

Because I delivered the poor
that cried,

And the fatherless that had
none to help him.

The blessing of him that was
ready to perish came upon me:

And I caused the widow's
heart to sing for joy.

I put on righteousness, and it
clothed me:

My judgment was as a robe
and a diadem.

I was eyes to the blind,
And feet was I to the lame.

I was a father to the poor:
And the cause of him that I
know not I searched out.

And I brake the jaws of the
wicked,

And plucked the prey out of
his teeth.

My root was spread out by
the waters,

And the dew lay all night
upon my branch.

My glory was fresh in me,
And my bow was renewed in
my hand.

Unto me men gave ear, and
waited,

And kept silence at my coun-
sel.

I chose out their way, and sat
as chief,

And dwelt as a king in the
army,

As one that comforteth the
mourners.

FROM CHAPTER XXXVIII.—MARVELS OF GOD'S CREATION.

Where wast thou when I laid
the foundations of the earth?

Declare, if thou hast under-
standing.

Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest ?

Or who hath stretched the line upon it ?

Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened ?

Or who laid the corner stone thereof ;

When the morning stars sang together,

And all the sons of God shouted for joy ?

Or who shut up the sea with doors, when it brake forth,

And said, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further :

And here shall thy proud waves be stayed ?

Hast thou commanded the morning since thy days began ;

And caused the dayspring to know his place :

Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea ?

Or hast thou walked in the search of the depth ?

Have the gates of death been opened unto thee ?

Or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death ?

Hast thou perceived the breadth of the earth ?

Declare if thou knowest it all.

Where is the way where light dwelleth ?

And as for darkness, where is the place thereof.

That thou shouldest take it to the bound thereof,

And that thou shouldest know the path to the house thereof ?

Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow ?

Or hast thou seen the treasures of the hail.

Which I have reserved against the time of trouble,

Against the day of battle and war ?

By what way is the light parted,

Or the east wind scattered upon the earth ?

Who hath cleft a channel for the overflowing of waters,

Or a way for the lightning of thunder ;

To cause it to rain on a land, where no man is ;

On the wilderness, wherein there is no man ;

To satisfy the desolate and waste ground ;

And to cause the bud of the tender herb to spring forth ?

Hath the rain a father ?

Or who hath begotten the drops of dew ?

Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven ?

Canst thou set the dominion thereof in the earth ?

Canst thou lift up thy voice to the clouds,

That abundance of waters
may cover thee ?

Canst thou send lightnings,
that they may go,

And say unto thee, Here we
are?

Who hath put wisdom in the
inward parts?

Or who hath given under-
standing to the heart ?

Who can number the clouds
in wisdom ?

Who provideth for the raven
his food ?

When his young ones cry
unto God,

And wander for lack of meat.

FROM CHAPTER XXXIX.—THE WAR HORSE.

Hast thou given the horse his
strength?

Hast thou clothed his neck
with the quivering mane?

Hast thou made him to leap
as a locust ?

The glory of his snorting is
terrible.

He paweth in the valley, and
rejoiceth in his strength;

He goeth on to meet the
armed men.

He mocketh at fear, and is not
affrightened,

Neither turneth he back from
the sword.

The quiver rattleth against
him,

The glittering spear and the
shield.

He swalloweth the ground
with fierceness and rage;

Neither believeth he that it is
the sound of the trumpet.

He saith among the trumpets,
Ha, ha! and he smelleth the
battle afar off,

The thunder of the captains,
and the shouting.

THE CANON.

The authoritative collection of the Scriptures is called *The Canon*. The Greek word *Canon* means a measuring line a rule. hence its later meaning—correct standard. After the Exile the sacred writings of the Jews were gradually collected and arranged in groups. This was not done all at once. The first official collection was *THE LAW* (the *Torah*), finally arranged by the

scribes of whom Ezra was the chief. It consisted of the first five books of the Bible (see vol. i. p. 176). It was made the guide of Israel's life.

The next collection was THE PROPHETS. In these were also included *Joshua, Samuel and Kings*, called by way of distinction *Former Prophets*. *Isaiah to Malachi* were the *Latter Prophets*, arranged in two groups of major and minor, according to their size. These were not regarded quite as high authority as *The Law*, though appreciation for them as moral forces and revelation from God has steadily increased as time rolled on.

The third collection was the HAGIOGRAPHHA, *i.e.* Sacred Writings (Heb. Kethubim-Writings). This miscellaneous collection included *Psalms, The Wisdom Literature* and the later historical books. This last collection was kept open quite late, the rabbis hesitating to admit *Ezekiel, The Song of Songs, Esther*, and more particularly *Ecclesiastes*. It was not till some thirty years after the Fall of Jerusalem about 100 A. C. E. that the Synhedrin at Jamnia finally completed and closed the Canon of Jewish Scripture.

The present text of the Bible is called the *Massoretic* text from *Massora* tradition; that is to say, it has been carefully preserved and *handed down* by the *Massorites*, as the authorities on the Bible text were called. The Bible was originally written in Phœnician letters, but after the captivity, Babylonian letters were used. These are the square letters seen in our Hebrew books to-day. Vowel points and punctuation marks were introduced much later. They will not be found in the synagogue scrolls of the Law to-day. The Massorites were very conscientious in their preservation of the text and when they found an error they only ventured to correct it in the margin.

BIBLE TRANSLATIONS.

It became early necessary to translate the Bible, for from the days of the captivity, the Jews spoke Aramæan (Chaldaic) not Hebrew. The first translations were therefore in Aramæan.

Such a translation were called TARGUM. This term is applied also to translation in general to paraphrase and to interpretation. A Targum was not made of the whole Bible at once nor by one person. As *Daniel*, *Ezra* and *Nehemiah* were written in Aramæan there is no Targum to them.

SEPTUAGINT. The Jews in Alexandria speaking Greek, naturally wanted a translation of the Bible in that tongue, not only for themselves, but also for their neighbors, some of whom were becoming proselytes to Judaism. It is called Septuagint (lxx), because there was a tradition that it was a work of seventy-two scholars. It was commenced about the year 250 B. C. E. the Law being translated first.

There was also a translation into Syriac known as *The Peshita*, i. e. *simple* (possibly a plain translation and not a paraphrase like the Targum).

The Bible has since been translated into all languages.

Although Hebrew ceased to be the spoken tongue of our fathers, still being the language of their Sacred Scriptures, it was retained in prayer and thus became *loshon hakodesh*, a holy tongue.

THE APOCRYPHA.

Some of the late religious writings from the Persian period to a few years after the fall of the Jewish nation, are called "The Apocrypha." The word means hidden. It may mean either that they were used for private circulation only, or that their authority is uncertain. They had not the authority of the Bible books. There are fourteen books—1 and 2 *Ezdras*, *Tobit*, *Judith*, *Additions to Esther*, *Wisdom of Solomon*, *Ecclesiasticus*, *Baruch*, *Song of the Three Holy Children*, *History of Susannah*, *Bel and the Dragon*, *Prayer of Manasseh*, 1 and 2 *Maccabees*. They are nearly all instances of steadfastness of faith under trial and were written to inspire Israel and encourage them in days of persecution, reminding us in that respect of

Daniel. Maccabees is the original source from which we learn of the Maccabean revolt and triumph.

The APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE is a collection of religious writings having the same tendency and purpose as the Apocrypha. The word *Apocalypse* means "vision," for they are presumed to be prophecies made known through visions.

RESUME OF HOLY DAYS

PRESENTED IN HISTORIC CONTINUITY.

THE THREE FESTIVALS.

1. PASSOVER—Nisan 15th.

Joseph, a descendant of the fathers of the Hebrews, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Israel), was sold into Egypt. His family followed. Their posterity were enslaved and delivered by Moses. Their freedom, commemorated in this festival, marks the birth of the *people* of Israel.

2. PENTECOST—Sivan 6th.

Moses led Israel through the wilderness and brought them to Mount Sinai, where they received the Law. This festival marks the birth of the *religion* of Israel.

3. TABERNACLES (tents)—Tishri 15th.

(a) For forty years they wandered in the wilderness, living in tents. This festival commemorates God's providential care of Israel while living in such frail homes.

(b) *Feast of Ingathering* is a second name given to this festival. For when they left the wilderness and conquered the land of Canaan in which they settled, they brought the first fruits gathered from their fields as offerings to the Temple at Jerusalem. This became the practice on each of the Three Festivals.

FAST OF AB—Ninth of Ab.

After continuing for several centuries under a monarchy, the nation split into two, Israel and Judah. Israel was overthrown in 722. On the 9th of Ab, 586 B. C. E., Judah was defeated and exiled to Babylon. Hence the Fast.

THE TWO MINOR FEASTS.

1. PURIM—Adar 14th.

In the year 538 the Judæans (Jews) were brought back to Canaan again by Cyrus the Persian and rebuilt the Temple. They remained under Persian rule for two centuries. During this period occurred the attempt of Haman to destroy the Jews. Their salvation by Mordecai and Esther is commemorated in this Feast.

2. CHANUKA—Kislev 25th.

In the year 332 Alexander the Greek conquered Persia and the Jews were transferred to Greek rule. In the year 175 King Antiochus tried to suppress their religion. Under Judas Maccabeus they defeated him and celebrated the Feast of the Re-dedicated (Chanuka) Temple.

They won complete independence in 142. This Maccabean dynasty was ended by Rome in 63 B. C. E. They continued under Roman vassalage until 66 A. C. E., when they revolted. They were defeated by Rome in 70, their Temple was burnt and they were scattered through the world. This final overthrow also occurred on 9th of Ab. The rabbinic Academies for the study of the Law were henceforth the centres of Jewish life. From them issued the Talmud.

THE TWO HOLY DAYS.

NEW YEAR and DAY OF ATONEMENT.

These do not commemorate historic events, but were instituted for religious uplift and moral regeneration. They are the most solemn days in the Jewish calendar.

For detailed account of these Feasts and Holy Days see Vol I, pp. 180-188.

EXAMINATION QUESTIONS.

CHAPTER I.

1. State the reasons for Israel's revolt.
2. What tribes and tributaries belonged to Israel?
3. What to Judah?
4. Compare Israel's revolution with that of the American colonists.

CHAPTER II.

1. Give the names and dates of the first five kings of Israel.
2. Where did Jeroboam build new Temples; and why?
3. What Syrian provinces did he lose?
4. What part is Syria about to play in Israel's history?

CHAPTER III.

1. Give the names and dates of the kings of the House of Omri?
2. What was Omri's attitude towards Judah?
3. With what nation did he make an alliance?
4. What city did he make his capital?

CHAPTER IV.

1. What were the consequences of Jezebel's influence on the religion of Israel?
2. Relate the Naboth incident.
3. What prophet intervened?
4. What is the meaning of Belial?

CHAPTER V.

1. Tell of Elijah's first meeting with Ahab.
2. Quote Elijah's answer to the widow of Zarephath.
3. What did he accomplish on Mt. Carmel?
4. Explain the meaning of Elijah's vision in the desert.
5. Relate some popular beliefs about Elijah and the religious customs in which he figures.

CHAPTER VI.

1. Tell of the growth of the Syrian power.
2. Why did the Israelites prefer fighting in the mountains.
3. Who was Micaiah?
4. Why did Ahab fight for Ramoth-Gilead? What was the consequence?

CHAPTER VII.

1. What was the Moabite Stone?
2. How was the battle against Moab decided?
3. What is said in the notes about stone?

CHAPTER VIII.

1. Relate the call of Elisha.
2. Give the Shunemite's answer, when reward was proffered.
3. Tell the story of the poor widow and draw the moral.

CHAPTER IX.

1. Why did Naaman at first refuse to accept the prophet's advice?
2. Why was Elisha called "the chariots and horsemen of Israel?"
3. Contrast the act of Gehazi with that of his master.

CHAPTER X.

1. By what means did Jehu seize the throne of Israel?
2. What do you think of his treatment of the Baal worshipers?
3. Who were the Rechabites?

CHAPTER XI.

1. Give the names and dates of the kings of the House of Jehu.
2. Tell of the famine in the reign of Jehoahaz.
3. Why did the lepers venture in the enemy's camp?
4. How did Israel's fortunes turn in the reign of Jeroboam II?

CHAPTER XII.

1. Name the first four kings of Judah.
2. What were the "Books of the Chronicles" of Israel and Judah?
3. Tell of Asa's conflicts with Baasha.
4. Where is the Gulf of Elath? What use did Jehoshaphat make of it?

CHAPTER XIII.

1. Name the next five kings of Judah, and give the dates of their accession.
2. Compare and contrast Athaliah and Jehu.
3. How was Joash saved from Athaliah's vengeance?

CHAPTER XIV.

1. What did Joash do for the Temple?
2. Was Amaziah justified in seeking conflict with Israel?
3. Why does religion suffer when priests are given too much material power?
4. What is the difference between a priest and a prophet?

CHAPTER XV.

1. Was a prophet a foreteller of the future?
2. What were the religious truths taught by the great prophets?
3. In what respect were they too severe?
4. Was their activity limited to the sphere of religion?

CHAPTER XVI.

1. When did Amos live?
2. What had he to say of Israel as God's people?
3. Quote what he says against mere formal religion.
4. In what respect does he commence a new epoch in prophecy?

CHAPTER XVII.

1. Contrast the difference in style and in fundamental teaching between Amos and Hosea.
2. What divine message does Hosea bring to his people?
3. Name and describe some of the gods of the heathens.
4. Quote a paragraph from Hosea's prophecy.
5. What is the order in which the literature of a nation grows?

CHAPTER XVIII.

1. Name the last kings of Israel.
2. Trace on the map the gradual advance of the Assyrians.
3. What is the meaning of cuneiform?
4. What did Uzziah do for Judah?
5. What two kings formed an alliance against Judah?

CHAPTER XIX.

1. Describe Isaiah's call.
2. Quote his teaching about the "remnant."
3. Quote his pictures of the golden age to come.
4. How was the approach of Assyria providentially explained?

CHAPTER XX.

1. Whose aid did Ahaz seek to save his kingdom?
2. How much of Israel was taken by Assyria in 734?
3. What king completely overthrew it and in what year?
4. What became of the Ten Tribes?

CHAPTER XXI.

1. Quote some of the teachings of the prophet Micah.
2. In what respect did he differ from Isaiah?
3. Give some details of Hezekiah's religious reforms.
4. Were they positive or negative?

CHAPTER XXII.

1. How did the fall of Israel affect Judah, religiously, politically?
2. Why did Isaiah discourage alliance with Egypt?
3. What king had made Judah a vassal of Assyria?
4. How did Isaiah answer Sennacherib's boast?
5. What became of his army?

CHAPTER XXIII.

1. Why was Hezekiah's reign called a golden age?
2. What was the character of Manasseh's reign?
3. Was all the good work of the prophets undone?
4. How does Micah describe the times?

CHAPTER XXIV.

1. What great religious work influenced the conduct of Josiah?
2. Contrast his reforms with those of Hezekiah.
3. What injunctions in Deuteronomy affected animal sacrifice and how?
4. Quote Micah's words on this form of worship.

CHAPTER XXV.

1. Why did Josiah engage in war with Egypt?
2. Where did the battle take place; what was the result?
3. Relate the early incidents in the life of Jeremiah.
4. How was Judah affected by reverses? How were they explained by Jeremiah; by Job?

CHAPTER XXVI.

1. Describe the civilization of the Babylonians.
2. When did the battle of Carchemish take place; what was its result?
3. Who urged Judah to rebel against Babylon?
4. What was Jeremiah's prediction; how was he treated?
5. Who now besieged Judah; with what result?

CHAPTER XXVII.

1. What advice did Jeremiah send the exiles?
2. What were the circumstances that induced the nobles to release their slaves?
3. Why was Jeremiah called a traitor?
4. Describe the second siege and give the date of the fall of Jerusalem.
5. Recite some verses from "Lamentations."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

1. Who was appointed governor of the Judæan remnant?
2. What did he achieve; what was his fate?
3. How many times did Judah rebel against Nebuchadrezzar? How did he treat them in each case?
4. What became of Jeremiah?
5. Why did Israel succumb to defeat; why did Judah survive it?

CHAPTER XXIX.

1. Give a description of Babylon.
2. How were the exiles treated?
3. Why did Judah's religion not fall with their country?

CHAPTER XXX.

1. How did Ezekiel characterize the shepherds of Israel?
2. Are we punished for the sins of our fathers? What said Ezekiel?
3. What did the vision in "the valley of dry bones" typify?
4. What Fasts were instituted in the Exile; what other religious observances?

CHAPTER XXXI.

1. Name Nebuchadnezzar's successors; how did each treat the Jews?
2. Who was Cyrus? Relate his conquests.
3. How does II. Isaiah point out God's providence in history?
4. What was the religion of the Persians? contrast it with Judaism.
5. Quote Isaiah's words concerning the religious welfare of mankind.
6. Explain the doctrine of the "Suffering Servant."

CHAPTER XXXII.

1. Why did Cyrus permit the exiles to return?
2. How many exiles returned? Why not all?
3. Who were the leaders of the emigrants?
4. How much of Canaan was given them?

CHAPTER XXXIII.

1. In what direction did Haggai show his activity?
2. Who were the Samaritans? What did they desire?
3. In what year was the Second Temple built? Why did the aged weep?
4. What is the meaning of "Messiah?" Trace the growth of this belief.
5. What did Zechariah teach about the Fast, the future glory of Jerusalem and the attitude of the heathen towards the Jew?

CHAPTER XXXIV.

1. What now became the guide of religious life?
2. Why did Ezra go to Judea?
3. What were the Scribes; what class of teachers preceded, and what class followed them?
4. Mention the leaders of the enemies of the Jews.

CHAPTER XXXV.

1. What office was held by Nehemiah, and under what king?
2. What was his first and most important work in Judea?
3. What was done by Ezra and Nehemiah for the religious welfare of the people?

CHAPTER XXXVI.

1. What did Nehemiah achieve for the poor of Canaan?
2. Quote Malachi's description of the true priest.
3. Why were the Jews dissatisfied?
4. What said Malachi about a day of retribution?

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE.

Kings of Israel.		Kings of Judah.	
<i>Prophets.</i>	B.C.E.	B.C.E.	<i>Prophets</i>
Jereboam I, . .	937	Re-ho-bo-am, . .	937
Nadab, . . .	916	Abijah, . . .	920
Baasha, . . .	914	Asa, . . .	917
Ela, ...	890	Jehoshaphat, . .	876
Zimri, ...	889		
HOUSE OF OMRI.		Jehoram, . . .	851
Omri, ...	889	A-haz-i-ah, . .	843
Ahab, ...	877	A-tha-li-ah, . .	842
Ahaziah, . . .	855	Joash, ...	836
Joram, ...	854	Amaziah, . . .	796
HOUSE OF JEHU.			
Jehu, ...	842	Uzziah, ...	786
Je-ho-a-haz, . .	814	Jotham, ...	737
Je-ho-ash, . . .	797	Ahaz, ...	735
Amos. { Jereboam II, . .	781	Hezekiah, . . .	715
Zechariah, . .	740	Manasseh, . . .	686
Shallum, . . .	740	Amon, ...	641
Hosea. { Menahem, . . .	740	Josiah, ...	639
Pe-ka-iah, . .	736	Je-ho-ia-kim, . .	608
Pekah, ...	735	Je-ho-ia-kin, . .	597
Hoshea, ...	733-722	Zedekiah, . . .	597-586
Fall of Samaria and Trans-		Isaiah.	
portation of Ten Tribes to		Micah.	
Assyria, ...		Zephaniah.	
720		Jeremiah.	
		Habakkuk.	
		Nahum.	
		Fall of Jerusalem, 587	

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

[CONTINUED.]

Prophets.

THE EXILE, ...	586-536	Ezekiel 2d Isaiah.
Fall of Babylon, ...	536	
Cyrus, ...	536	Obadiah.
THE RESTORATION, ...	536	
Cambyzes, ...	529	Haggai.
Darius, ...	522	} Zechariah.
BUILDING OF SECOND TEMPLE, ...	516	
Xerxes, ...	485	Joel.
Artaxerxes, ...	465	
EZRA goes to Judea, ...	458	
NEHEMIAH's First Visit to Judea, ...	444	
" Second " "	432	Malachi.



NEHEMIAH REBUILDS THE WALL OF JERUSALEM. Schnorr.
See page 258.

Handwritten text in a cursive script, likely a historical document or manuscript. The text is written on a dark, possibly leather-bound, surface. The script is dense and fills most of the page. There are some visible signs of wear and damage, particularly a large dark stain near the bottom left corner.

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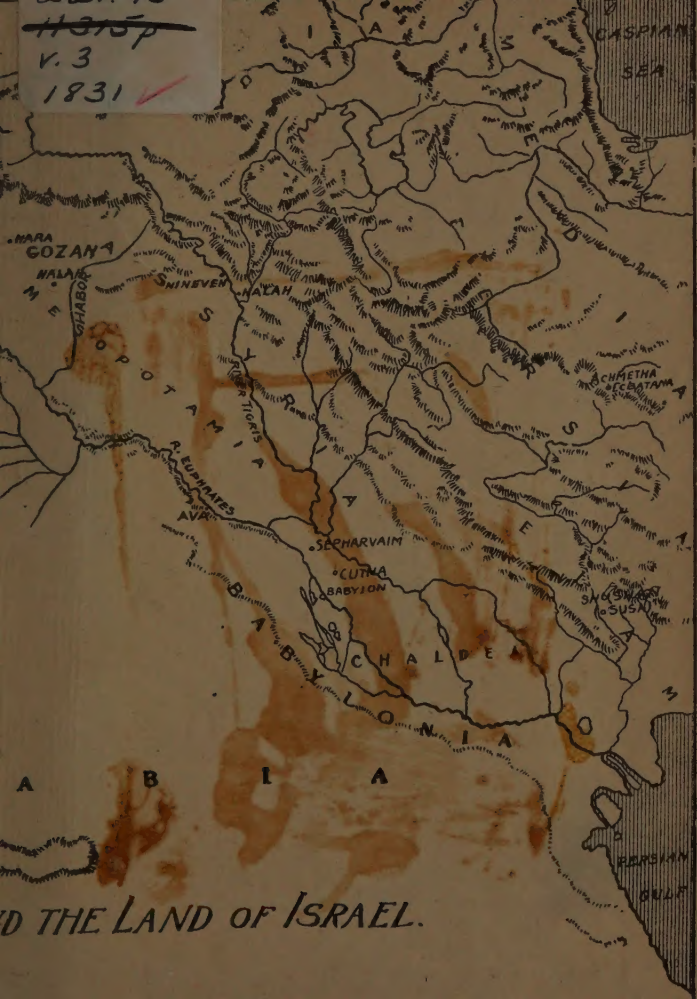
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